



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE
FOUR SLAVES
OF
CYTHERA,

A Romance, in Ten Cantos.

BY THE
REV. ROBERT BLAND,
AUTHOR OF EDWY AND ELGIVA, AND SIR EVERARD.

*Quantunque il simular sia le più volte
Ripreso, e dia di mala mente indici ;
Si trova pure in molte cose e molte
Aver fatti evidenti benefici.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES,
AND ORME, PATERNOSTER-ROW ; AND T. REYNOLDS
AND SON, OXFORD-STREET.

1800.

PR
4149
B435f

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FIRST.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FIRST.

LIGHT heaved the wave, and soft the breezes blew,
While, cheered with hopes of home, a gallant crew
In their trim vessel bounded o'er the main,
From camps and broils on Acre's battle-plain.
Now full in sight the Paphian gardens smile,
And thence, by many a green and summer isle,
Whose ancient walls and temples seem to sleep,
Enshadowed on the mirror of the deep,
They coast along Cythera's happy ground,
Gem of the seas, for love's delight renown'd.

Four christian chieftains, each of different land,
O'er plains and waters, lead the venturous band ;
But English Alfred held the highest claim
From birth, and deeds of prowess known to fame.
All light of heart, with tale, or social lay,
In pleasant pastime they deceive the way ;
Recount their high atchievements in the field,
Of storm, or single fight, with spear and shield ;
Of giant Saracens, who bow'd the head ;
Of dreaded foe, or dear-loved comrade dead,
Whose arm had once a Paynim rout defied—
And as they view, exulting in their pride,
High on the mast their spoils from foemen won,
Shields, banners, scutcheons glittering to the sun,
Whisper their hearts, in life, or in the grave,
“ In every age all honour to the brave.”

Thus merrily they fared from day to day,
By many a breezy cape and quiet bay ;

Till, as it fortun'd, on that silvery deep,
Where sweet Cythera rises dark and steep,
While drowsily and low their pennons hung,
And faint their vespers to the Virgin rung ;
They mark'd the banner of a foe display'd,
And helm, and hauberk, glimmering through the
 shade,
From two proud barks that skimm'd the water o'er,
Beneath the gloom and covert of the shore.

Each Christian warrior, startled at the sight,
In plated steel array'd his limbs for fight ;
While floats the Paynim music from afar,
From many a cymbal's beat, and pipe of war ;
To which in cadence true the rowers plied
Their painted galleys towering side by side.

I love the luxuries of song, nor dare
“ The pomp and circumstance of glorious war ;”

Nursed in soft bow'rs of peace, I hurry o'er
Shrieks, wounds, and death, and floods of streaming
gore.

Suppose the battle gain'd—that long in vain
Our Christian friends the arrowy hail sustain ;
That, unsubdued in soul, in body spent,
To press of numbers yields their hardiment.

Bear with me yet awhile, nor bid me tell
What various fates the captive crew befell ;
Enough it suits the purpose of my lay,
To let these matters pass, and simply say,
How the four Knights, with whom my tale began,
Were by the foe made captive, to a man ;
And how, since fickle fortune ceased to smile,
They lay, sad wretches, in Cythera's isle.
Yet ill they brook'd, in separate prisons mew'd,
The victor's taunt, and pains of solitude,
Since each to either bore a brother's heart,
Nor ever roam'd, nor ever fought apart.

No longer summon'd by the morning light,
From dreams of glory to the pomp of fight,
They waked to labours, by the proud abhorr'd,
Chain'd to the galley of a Turkish lord,
Who reign'd the despot of that beauteous shore,
Where all the Loves and Graces dwelt before.

Their irksome toil 'twere needless to relate,
Nor how the valiant triumph over fate,
Unbroken still through every change of state.
Hardship, disgrace, and poverty, they know,
Friends, and their roof, and native soil forego;
From parents, wives, and offspring, bear to part;
And, for the tender links that bind the heart,
Consume their strength, oppress'd with slavery's chain,
In smother'd anguish, and in mute disdain,
And give the adventurous morning of their days
To Fortune's wildest mockeries for praise.

Their lord was Hamet, of a generous mind,
With riches blessed, and now to years declined;

Who, though he bow'd the knights to servile shame,
And worse than death abhorr'd the Christian name ;
Yet with his captives made distinction due,
Between the nobler and the vulgar crew ;
Less toil imposed, and better food allow'd,
And dress that mark'd them from the baser crowd.
Yet fearing most from those of high degree,
More ardent known, and eager to be free,
To mar their plots, behind his house he gave
A separate cell to every noble slave ;
Where each, to all his brother knights unknown,
Retired to slumber when the sun was down.

But gentle slumber, oft at evening call'd,
Came not to Alfred, vanquish'd and enthrall'd ;
And as it irksome seem'd to lay his head
For ever musing on a sleepless bed,
He strung his idle lute, and set apart
The silent evening for his tuneful art ;
And ever as he sang of times gone by,
Of ladies love, or glorious chivalry ;

Chains, prison, labour, vanish'd from his sight,
And golden visions cheer'd him through the night.

A narrow court, high-wall'd, and guarded well,
Divided Hamet's mansion from his cell ;
In which one eve, by labour half subdued,
And now return'd to sleep and solitude,
As to and fro he paced, absorb'd in care,
To lose an hour, and catch the cooling air,
He marked a lattice open o'er his head,
From which descending by a silken thread,
A viol hung ; and sure no bad intent
He augur'd from the tuneful instrument ;
But upward as he look'd with grateful eyes,
To thank the giver of so fair a prize,
A lily hand he saw with mute delight,
That waved and closed the lattice on his sight.

Pleased with the token of a friend unknown,
From every string he call'd the mellow tone ;

And from that hour his charmed fancy wrought
Such dreams of hope, and sweet illusive thought,
That his poor cell a palace seem'd to rise,
His narrow court was Eden to his eyes,
His daily toil to pleasure was beguiled,
And liberty in hateful thralldom smiled.

Eve came again, again he took his stand,
To watch the waving of the friendly hand.
Nor long before the opening lattice cheer'd
His wavering heart—the well-mark'd sign appear'd—
And thus a whisper fell upon his ear :—
“ By every power that Christians love and fear,
“ Our evening converse lock within thy soul;
“ A breath condemns us both to bitter dole;
“ Accept my boon that now descends below—
“ I bode thee good—no more enquire to know.”

“ Whoe'er thou art,” the Christian thus replied,
“ Of high, or humble lot, or maid, or bride,

“ By every name that Christian men adore,
“ I swear thee silence, and enquire no more.”
He vow’d, and strait descends a basket stored
With fruits, and dainty conserves for his board.
“ Sweet rest be thine !” a gentle voice was heard,
And ere the lattice closed, the lily hand appear’d.

Swift went the hours—again in evening shade
The knight expects a token from the maid.
The easement was unelosed, again descend
Rich eates and conserves from his hidden friend;
A golden easket next, in which he found
A crisped ringlet with blue ribband bound;
A taper next, by whose benignant light
He read, “ All greeting to the Christian knight;
“ For not unfriended in a needful hour,
“ Here shall he give to grief his youthful flower :
“ There lives, who views him with a kindly eye,
“ And fain would soothe his hard captivity.

“ To-morrow morn my father puts to sea,
“ Encircled by a gallant company,
“ To note with revel, and with songs of mirth,
“ The morn that gave his dear Zoraida birth.
“ Look blythe, as well befits a festal day,
“ And with light spirits trim the gondolay ;
“ For she, whose darksome hair with ribband bound
“ Shall match one curl within the casket found,
“ Befriends thee now, and shall thy toil reward,
“ With many an after-token of regard.”
He read—and now a murmur faint express’d,
“ Christian, adieu—Zoraida bids thee rest !”

But little rest had Alfred through the night,
Upbraiding oft the slow return of light ;
Each hour with tread of tortoise seem’d to creep,
Nor aught his eyes demand repair of sleep.

The morn arose—again the unwilling slaves
Were chain’d to ply their labour on the waves ;

Trimm'd was the gallant barge with streamers gay,
Cymbal, and song, and revel, crown the day,
And all was merry in the gondolay.
All but one maid, who, by her mournful mien,
Appear'd as absent from the passing scene;
Her dark-brown hair a coronal embraced,
And a rich zone confined her slender waste.
A portly youth in gaudy robe attired,
Who now himself, and now the nymph admired,
Sat by her side, and oft with forward air
Would whisper trifles to the silent fair,
Which ever as he told, with indrawn sigh
She answer'd to his awkward courtesy.
Yet nought abash'd, he strove to entertain
His lady love with sonnets light and vain;
One while in homely joke he laugh'd to scorn
The humbler sort, to lowly labour born;
One while his keen and biting satire fell
On the poor slaves who row'd his bark so well;

And with quaint insults of proverbial rhyme,
To every dashing of their oars kept time :
In all he sued for favour in her eyes,
And strove with backward nature to be wise.

But she, sad lady, mute and dull the while,
Against her better reason forc'd a smile ;
For rude disdain could never find a place
In that soft bosom, or enchanting face.
Well mark'd the English knight her crisped hair,
Full proud to find his mystic friend so fair,
And hardly might his boiling ire contain,
And hardly check'd his anger and disdain,
Oft as the bloated lover sitting near,
Or press'd her hand, or whisper'd in her ear,
Or call'd her Queen, and idol of his heart,
“ His more than life, his own far better part ;”
To which Zoraida sadly made reply,
In the meek language of a vacant eye.

Yet Alfred wisely, as the note express'd,
Restrain'd whate'er was bitter in his breast,
And plied his oar so blythely o'er the flood,
That all who saw admir'd his merry mood ;
E'en stupid Zulemah approval gave,
And found for once some humour in a slave.

So went the day till humid evening fell,
And summon'd every oarman to his cell ;
Where, as the knight of England thought again
On fair Zoraida, and her clumsy swain,
And watch'd her chamber through the dusky shade,
The lattice open'd, and reveal'd the maid.
Again she murmur'd, " Gentle knight, adieu !"
Her custom'd pittance lower'd, and withdrew.
Thus eve on eve the salutation done,
Ere further commune pass'd, the fair was gone ;
Or if she tarried, seem'd but coldly kind,
As one who wished, but feared to speak her mind.

It chanc'd that Zulemah, who wooed the fair
With awkward zeal, and ill-requited air,
Press'd a sick couch, and mournful as he lay,
To burning fever and to spleen a prey,
Bethought him, that to cure his fretful mood,
The merry slave perchance might do him good,
And of his master Hamet ask'd to try
The sovereign aid of Alfred's company ;
All which Zoraida told at evening hour,
In private commune from her latticed bower.
“ And strive,” she said, “ I charge thee, gentle
knight,
“ Unless thou hold my proffer'd friendship light,
“ By every art, by every hopeful word,
“ To raise the drooping languor of my lord ;
“ Strain all thy wit to medicine the disease,
“ And for my favour do thy best to please.”

At morn the knight to Zulemah was sent,
Now faint of mood from sickly dreariment ;

Upon a couch his bloated bulk reclin'd
Of roseate silk with downy plumage lin'd,
On which a broidered coverlet was spread,
And deep in cushions sunk his heavy head.
But scantly could the knight with look demure
Behold the chamber's garish furniture.
Pards, griffins, peacocks, monkeys, men, and apes,
And thousand forms grotesque of monstrous shapes,
In bronze, in gold, in ivory, sought with pains,
At once rebuked the buyer's lack of brains.
Two courtly damsels at the couch were seen
To tend their lord, and mark his varying mien,
By which, interpreting each beck and sign,
They strove his hidden meaning to divine,
And gave by turns, his humour as they note,
Medicine and dainty food, a bane and antidote.

Soon as with indrawn breath and felt feet
They saw the stranger enter the retreat,

One waved him near, and gently thus bespoke :—
“ Slave, ’tis our master’s pleasure that you joke ;
“ For since the hateful malady began,
“ That now unnerves that paragon of man,
“ Ne’er have we seen him at the feast rejoice,
“ Though every dish be season’d to his choice ;
“ Nor talk, nor droll, with his accustom’d cheer,
“ That charms the wondering minds of all who
hear.”—

Thus coarsely order’d, and but ill at ease,
The stranger tried, but only tried, to please.
Jest, tale, event, he ran in memory o’er,
At which a hundred wits had laugh’d before ;
But nought might then the sullen hearer move,
To break his leaden silence, and approve ;
And, tax’d with dulness, to his cell at eve
The disappointed knight return’d to grieve ;
Commission’d from her lover’s hand to bear
A brilliant diamond for Zoraida’s hair ;
With message fond of import, trite, and vain,
And with the morrow to return again.

Soon to her wonted lattice came the maid,
Then handing down the clue of silken thread,
With joyous eye upon the gift intent,
First took the diamond, then the compliment;
And question'd next what favour he had gain'd,
And how her sickly lord was entertain'd.
But when she heard that not a smile, or glance
Of favour moved his lordly countenance;
That Alfred's efforts to divert were vain,
And only answer'd coldly with disdain:
"Take courage, knight, and set thy heart at ease,
"Myself, she said, will tutor thee to please;
"Great was thy zeal, and well thy pliant tongue
"Rehears'd whate'er before was said, or sung;
"Whate'er by ancient poet has been writ,
"And still among the wise shall pass for wit;
"But zeal to please directed thee astray,
"And led thee far and farther from the way.
"I charge thee, gentle knight, recal to thought,
"Whatever once thy merry nurses taught;

“ Events of childhood, with its hopes and fears,
“ And all that charm’d thee in thine infant years.
“ For plain simplicity my lord enjoys,
“ And pretty tales of good and idle boys ;
“ Of converse held between a bird and beast,
“ A dance of butterflies, or peacock’s feast ;
“ The which, I promise, if thou well recite,
“ My lord for very joy shall burst outright.
“ Nor he alone—but childish stories make
“ Our muftis reverend beards with laughter shake ;
“ And statesmen, warriors, noble dames, agree,
“ To hear and read of nought but infancy ;
“ But if perplex’d with feeling, wit, or sense,
“ Thy theme will shock this age of innocence.
“ The toil of thinking, gentle Alfred, spare,
“ A toil too great for noble minds to bear ;
“ But strive a thoughtless pleasure to impart,
“ With easy flattery steal into his heart ;
“ So shall my lord thy services regard
“ With smile of favour, and a due reward.

“ Nor shall he rain down gifts on thee alone,
“ But, from thy pliant arts more generous grown,
“ With costlier presents shall he try to move
“ Zoraida’s heart to yield him all her love.
“ Farewell, Sir Knight.”—She said, and disappear’d,
And left him musing deep on all he heard.

“ And thou, farewell, pernicious maid,” he cries,
“ Whose sordid heart an angel face belies ;
“ Conferring all that men in honour hold,
“ Smiles, and fair words, and holy love, for gold.
“ Henceforth I rase thy image from my breast,
“ That long had held it far estranged from rest ;
“ And from thy cursed yoke myself I free,
“ And break a chain more dread than slavery.—
“ I think of thee no more,”—he said with pride,
Nor thought, nor mused, nor dream’d of aught beside.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SECOND.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SECOND.

Soon as the morrow came, with heavy heart
The knight arose to play a new-taught part ;
Hard lesson learn'd in slavery's bitter school,
To work a galley, or to please a fool ;
To love in vain, with cold contempt repaid,
And live the debtor of a heartless maid.
Thus musing to the thankless task he went,
But scarce could hide his sullen discontent.

News of his love, fond Zulemah demands,
And how she took the present from his hands ;

Or look'd she frowning, or with cheerful eye
Received the token of his courtesy ?
To this, well tutor'd now, the slave replied :—
“ A thousand greetings from thy future bride ;
“ Your noble natures feelingly agree,
“ And seem design'd for endless harmony ;
“ For riches both, and both for splendour born,
“ Ye laugh the idle pains of love to scorn ;
“ Know then, Zoraida with a smile of joy
“ Received thy homage, and the glittering toy,
“ And vow'd for ever, while she lived, to prize
“ The giver and the gift beyond her eyes.”

This said, with artful flattery next he tried
His little reason, and o'er-weening pride :
He call'd him fortune's eldest son and heir,
Jewel of men, assassin of the fair ;
Sublimed to gravity his want of sense,
Majestic term'd his bloated corpulence ;
His head's vast orbit, and lack-lustre eye,
Were each a several type of dignity ;

His vacant look, benevolence of face,
His awkward gesture, light and easy grace ;
His nonsense reason, his unletter'd mind
To quick, unaided nature was refined ;
His voice, when tuned, a lady's ear to greet,
Dangerous as mermaids' music, and as sweet
Nor could the world, of every beauty drain'd,
Search'd far and wide for all that it contain'd,
Of good, of fair, of witty, brave, and wise,
Produce so vast a miracle of size,
With whom compared, the rest, howe'er endow'd,
Were but a vulgar and ignoble crowd.

With words like these, he pleased at little cost,
Extolling yet whate'er he wanted most ;
His wit, that kept the hearer in amaze,
And modest worth, that ever shrunk from praise,
So high, that none to flattery could aspire,
So nice, as made it dangerous to admire ;
All which, with tales of infancy between,
The flatterer told with such an artless mien,

That rapt, inspired, entranced, as in a dream,
The hearer caught the dear delusive theme ;
And yet was held in wonder and delight,
So sweet the food, so large his appetite.

But evening stole upon the charming lay,
And swept the fond and idle joy away ;
When thus he thank'd the flatterer, “ Know from
hence,
“ I mark thee, Alfred, for a man of sense ;
“ Ne’er have I witness’d, at thine early youth,
“ Such keen remark, and nice regard for truth ;
“ ’Tis shame that merit, like thine own, should lie
“ O’ercast and darken’d by obscurity ;
“ But share my gifts, and though by fortune barr’d
“ From that steep height of favour, my regard ;
“ Yet when myself shall condescend to wed,
“ And deign to take Zoraida to my bed,
“ Here shalt thou fatten at our proper charge,
“ To please our humours, and to trim our barge.’

He said, and raised a necklace to his sight
Of brilliant gems, so costly, pure, and bright,
That every pearl, and every separate gem,
Had found a place in England's diadem.

Fraught with this gift to win a loveless heart,
And pleased, though humbled, at his new-found art,
The slave return'd, and to the fair convey'd
Whate'er her lover gave, whate'er he said.
Thus for a time fond Zulemah believed;—
The knight yet flatter'd, still the fair received;
It seem'd divided passion sway'd her mind,
To honour now, to avarice now inclined.
She loath'd the giver, yet his bounty prized,
His splendour honour'd, yet his wit despised;
And dull indifference, with her favouring smile
On Alfred bent, 'twere hard to reconcile;
Till on an hour when weary men reposed,
By her fair hand the lattice was unclosed,
And with a cheering voice and joyous eye,
She thus reveal'd the guarded mystery.

ZORAIDA.

“ Alfred, take back this precious-seeming weight,
“ I loath the giver, and the gift I hate ;
“ Gems have no lustre for Zoraida’s eyes,
“ And if for aught this casket yet I prize,
“ ’Tis that for thee the glittering toy I stored,
“ For ever adding to the costly hoard,
“ Made niggard of my nature but for thee,
“ To burst thy bonds, and purchase liberty.

“ Let those, whom gold persuaded, ever hold
“ Their sordid hearts united yet by gold ;
“ And ever toil with newly added gain,
“ To goad indifference into love in vain,
“ Who dream that halls of luxury can inspire
“ A waning passion with reluctant fire ;
“ But love demands nor gold, nor selfish tie,
“ On leafy beds it couches healthfully ;
“ It wears no charm nor amulet to thrive,
“ No love-juice needs to keep it still alive,

“ Nor clime, nor fortune, nor degree, nor name,
“ But ever reigns in every lot the same ;
“ In Thracian snows, or Tempe’s sunny vale,
“ In wealth or poverty, in bliss or bale.

ALFRED.

“ Oh happy hour, that sets a captive free,
“ And from a baser bondage rescues thee !
“ For though thy smiles of favour and regard
“ For all my labour were a rich reward,
“ And still that mystic token from thy hair
“ Sooth’d my fond hope, and raised me from despair,
“ A heavier fate perversely seem’d to place
“ Whate’er I lov’d in Zulemah’s embrace,
“ And made thee bow, more servile than a slave,
“ Thy noble nature to a vulgar knave.
“ I deem’d thy father, blinded by a dower,
“ Had doom’d his age’s pride, his fairest flow’r,
“ Torn from a kindly parent soil, to feed
“ On rank corruption with that poisonous weed.

ZORAIDA.

“ So wills my sire—but by that holy light
“ That views our slumbering world, and rules the night,
“ Worse than a mortal mineral I hold
“ His hated self, his banqueting, and gold ;
“ And, though compell’d my loathing to disguise,
“ Never shall morn upon the nuptials rise ;
“ But feign’d excuses shall my sire deceive,
“ And gain from time to time a blest reprieve.
“ Meanwhile, (for oft thy lays and mournful eyes
“ Have own’d a wish to join our destinies,)
“ In happy hour, by force or safer guile,
“ Prepare to win me from Cythera’s isle.
“ And whether famed for title and for power,
“ Or only rich in sovereign nature’s dower,
“ Or destined o’er a dangerous world to roam,
“ Or bless’d in some fair region with a home,
“ Thee would I choose—and all my future voice
“ Shall give approval to my former choice.

ALFRED.

“ Thou know’st not, lady, what it is to brave
“ The storm of fight, or tempest on the wave,
“ And, absent from a tranquil home, to bear
“ The deadly night-damp, and a scanty fare ;
“ Estranged from every dear and fond delight,
“ To follow fortune with a wandering knight,
“ And with o’erlabour’d sense, and limbs oppress’d
“ With tedious turmoil, and the day’s unrest,
“ To make thy bed upon the chilly ground,
“ Where bower the birds, and cruel beasts abound.
“ For I have wander’d since my dawning prime,
“ And still must wander through uncertain time,
“ Bound by a solemn vow.—Ten years are o’er
“ Since my fond parents left their native shore,
“ Since my brave sire, De Courcy, cross’d the sea
“ With martial England’s proud nobility
“ For Paynim land, and with the daring train
“ My mother sued to go, nor sued in vain.

“ And through the lapse of time I treasure yet
“ Some faint records, ’twere deadly to forget ;
“ How at the hour that took me from her side,
“ A golden medal round my neck she tied,
“ And bade me wear it with her parting sigh,
“ Through every change of fickle destiny.
‘ Take it,’ she said, with eyes bedimm’d by tears,
“ That yet are imaged through the mist of years,
‘ Nor suffer power of man nor fate to wrest
‘ Thy mother’s last memorial from thy breast.’

“ She spoke, and ne’er return’d to bless her son—
“ Year after year had slowly linger’d on—
“ Nor from that parting hour had distant fame
“ Brought the glad sound of either parent’s name.—

“ But when my limbs to manly stature grew,
“ And manly objects fix’d my opening view,
“ I left my father’s halls, and kneeling low
“ On Becket’s stone, I vow’d a deadly vow,

“ By that dread stone uncleansed of sainted blood,
“ To be a wanderer over land and flood ;
“ Estranged from peace, and courting deadliest feud,
“ Where’er I went through nations fierce and rude,
“ Till I could know where live my parents dear,
“ Or find their tomb, and grace it with a tear.
“ Nor have I idly cross’d o’er land and main,
“ Nor has my pious search been made in vain ;
“ One half my toil the pitying heavens have spared—
“ For o’er the Syrian desart as I fared,
“ On a lone tomb, with rude design express’d,
“ I saw De Courcy’s name and eagle crest.
“ There first the metal of my sword I tried,
“ Till, conqueror oft, again I cross’d the tide,
“ To find a softer parent, and enquire
“ Where lived, or died, the relic of my sire.
“ And should a kinder fortune set me free
“ From the low bonds of hateful slavery,
“ Still must I bear with hunger, cold, and heat,
“ Till heaven shall make the righteous vow complete.

“ Bethink thee, lady, how thy tender frame,
“ And heart, that knows of terror but the name,
“ Will share with me a rude disast’rous fate,
“ That bows e’en stubborn manhood to its weight.”

ZORAIDA.

“ Enough, enough, good Alfred, cease to prove,
“ By sad recitals, thy Zoraida’s love ;
“ Nor deem that fear shall bend me to resign,
“ Whatever chance of future life be thine :
“ ’Tis not a frame of this, or other mould,
“ The hidden heart alone reveals the bold.
“ For I could brook the buffets of mankind,
“ Unhoused beneath the heat, or wintry wind ;
“ Could live on roots, as, when the world began,
“ Our ancient parents livd, ere softer man
“ From sea and air a costlier banquet claim’d,
“ And from the bitter earth by labour tamed.
“ For though I weep, and haply look but pale,
“ To hear thy lips recount the fearful tale,

“ Tis but to think how rich my board was spread,
“ How calm and softly pillow’d was my head,
“ While thou with scant and homely fare at best,
“ Upon a field bed laid thee down to rest.

“ Oh! I could cheerly cabin with the poor,
“ Nor rail at fate, nor ask a loftier door;
“ Assured and dreadless cross the nightly wold,
“ Death, storm, and pillage, all unseen behold,
“ So thou wert near—And in thine hour of need,
“ These hands should deck for fight thy battle-steed;
“ Myself would brace thy beaver, bring thy shield,
“ And send thee, bright and glorious, to the field.

“ Yes, I would go with thy adventurous bands,
“ O’er waves unfurrow’d, to undream’d of lands;
“ To dreary desarts, by no coulter plough’d,
“ Where range at will a wild and lawless crowd;
“ And if a thought, untender, or severe,
“ To work thee noyance, ever harbour here;

“ If e’er at toil, or hazard, I repine,
“ Or breathe a wish for other fate than thine ;
“ Or with thy kindly biddings disaccord,
“ And fail observance to my bosom’s lord ;
“ Spurn me to earth, forget that ere you knew
“ A wretch so frail, disloyal, and untrue.

“ And when in years enrich’d with glorious spoil,
“ We rest in honour from contentious toil,
“ And in the calmy bay of lovely peace
“ Bid all our ills and all our wanderings cease,
“ No longer toss’d, but harbour’d safe at last,
“ How gladly will we talk of times forepast,
“ Till at the verge of dull and frosty age,
“ Content we end our happy pilgrimage.”

ALFRED.

“ Then, fickle Fate, no more I call thee hard,
“ Nor court thy favour, nor thy frown regard ;

“ Thy love, Zoraida, that has cheer’d my breast,
“ When friends were absent, and myself oppress’d,
“ Shall, like a guardian seraph, be my guide
“ O’er plain, and mountain, and the whelming tide ;
“ And lead me on, a wanderer now no more,
“ Pursuing joy on every distant shore ;
“ Lighten my toil, and make my sorrow mirth,
“ And crown my search with her who gave me birth.”

ZORAIDA.

“ Mistrust it not—and how shall I rejoice
“ In thine again to hear a mother’s voice !
“ E’en now I view her in my fancy’s eye,
“ The type of calm and graceful dignity ;
“ Gentle as her, on whom I hardly smiled,
“ Ere pining anguish tore her from her child,
“ Whose image yet my sire in memory keeps,
“ How deeply graved ! and, as he eyes it, weeps.
“ But now, farewell—for see, the growing light
“ Shames the pale moon, and puts the stars to flight.

“ Go break thy fetters, and thy comrades free—
“ But by each dread and hallowed mystery,
“ E’en by that holy font, of power to lave
“ The soul’s corruption, and the sinner save,
“ For which I thirst my wavering heart to cure,
“ And from abhorred rites to make me pure;
“ I charge thee, Christian, let our secret rest
“ For ever lock’d and treasured in thy breast;
“ E’en to the brothers of thy heart unknown,
“ Devoutly guarded by ourselves alone.”

Fast fell her tears—and with a faint adieu,
She mark’d the parting moment, and withdrew.

Spirit of him, who, fill’d with heavenly fire,
By Avon’s water strung his playful lyre,
Who first a barbarous tongue to music wrought,
Refined with cadence, and inspired with thought,
Who claim’d erewhile, unrivall’d and alone,
O’er wit’s fair realm an undisputed throne,

Smile on me now ;—and call thy brother too,
Whose flight I strive and tremble to pursue ;
Or while he told, in dreamy fancy lost,
Of proud Honoria, and the horseman ghost,
How reason dawn'd from love in Cymon's mind,
And the poor heart by Sigismonda shrined—
Oh, smile!—and cheer me with a mild regard,
Give strength and courage to a venturous bard ;
With me descend to every captive's cell,
And prompt me words to sing what each befell :
For yet enthrall'd three noble knights remain ;
Oh lend your aid to set them free again !

But no—in vain I call ye to inspire—
Ye blush indignant, and with frowns retire.
Forgive me, shades, if to so dull a theme
I dared for once to break your rapturous dream ;
But in the various tale that I recite,
When nobler subjects ask a loftier flight,

Uncall'd, be present from your native sky,
Bear me from earth, and lend me wings to fly.

But Thou, whatever named, or nymph, or muse,
Oft seen to haunt the muddy banks of Ouse,
With clownish mien, and measure of a drone,
A boorish gesture, and a nasal tone,
Whispering grave statements in thy darling's ear,
Oh help me to discharge the long arrear!
And while for worthier themes I take repose,
Recount a simple fact in simple prose.

To every captive's cell I now repair,
To sing, or haply say, how things went there.
'Tis said, 'tis sung, already by my fay,
Three words at most shall make it clear as day.
Have ye not heard of Alfred's fate above,
A cell, a bower, a lady, and a love?
In him ye know what to the rest befell—
Each knight was destined to a separate cell,

And every cell a latticed bower o'erhung,
In every bower a lady blythe and young,
And every lady with the close of light
Held secret commune with her chosen knight ;
And every knight to every maid profess'd
To keep the secret treasured in his breast,
E'en to the brothers of his heart unknown,
Devoutly guarded by themselves alone.

Now in a trice of time behold them free,
By Alfred ransom'd from captivity :
But ere they parted, each to seek again
His native country, and his loved domain,
The master knight convened the kindred band,
And thus to either gave his last command:—

“ Comrades in fight, one debt alone remains,
“ To him whose hoarded treasure broke your chains,
“ That, as ye owe the joyous boon to me
“ Of thralldom changed to happy liberty,

“ For one whole year ye be obedient still,

“ In every action subject to my will ;

“ Nor ever wish, nor venture to enquire,

“ At what I guess—but do as I desire.

“ This on his oath I ask of every knight,

“ And thus my bounty shall he well requite.”

Thus sworn, each comrade with a favouring wind

Departs— though haply each in secret mind,

Reserves the hope, his year of promise o’er,

To visit fair Cythera’s isle once more—

What separate plans they form’d I need not say,

For in the sequel of my merry lay,

Each plan, however nobly wrought, you’ll find

Forestall’d by Alfred’s self, who staid behind.

Deep in the woods, remote from public sight,

He lived, and only ventured forth by night ;

There practised long a beggar’s part to play,

For loathsome tatters changed his new array,

Hands, face, and features, stain’d with tawny juice,

And learn’d a menial air and speech from use.

Call'd Selim now, and changed in voice and face,
In Hamet's ground he begg'd a gardener's place ;
And louting low, with look deject and wan,
O'er a long train of miseries he ran ;
How when a boy he fought the Christian host ;
A prisoner next he pined on England's coast ;
What thirst, what hunger, there he long endured,
And stripes, whose livid marks would ne'er be cured ;
And should his honour doubt it, to his eyes
The dreadful wounds would prove he told no lies ;
How, would he give but raiment, food, and roof,
And put his willing duty to the proof,
His honour's garden, by the coming spring,
Work'd by his hands, would be a different thing.

His sorry plight, his prime consumed by care,
His hungry eye, and frank and simple air,
At once convinced old Hamet of the truth,
Who pitied first, and then engaged the youth.

Now, damsels gay, let Alfred still deceive
With Selim's name, and Hamet still believe ;
Let one, with spade and rake, adorn the soil,
The other feed him, and approve his toil ;
Let fair Zoraida, and the sisters three,
Love on in secret, and the knights be free ;
Each in his native land to sojourn still,
To feast, to tilt, and do whate'er he will ;
While for a breathing time I halt, to prove,
Of all the varied plots of arms, or love,
That not a lay by old or modern wit
Has yet been written, or shall e'er be writ,
Whose every part in structure and design
Fits to its fellow part so apt as mine,
Though far disjoin'd, so subject to controul,
Whene'er 'tis call'd, to form a perfect whole.
On this full long I ponder'd in my thought,
For this a ruler and a compass bought,
Determined ere my hands began to build,
That not a crevice should remain unfill'd.

I learn'd my art, and toiling nights and days,
(As careful joiners say in learned phrase,)
Dove-tailed my song, and made each wedge agree
With every chink, and fit it to a *T*—
That answering parts might join compact and tight,
With answering uses to their opposite.

What dolt is that by yonder lady's side,
Who with both hands her laughter seems to hide ?
'Tis poison, sure, he drops into her ear—
Methinks I heard him whisper, with a sneer :—
“ Four knights, four vows, four ladies, and four
 bowers,
“ I'faith, thy story runs upon all fours ;
“ Whoe'er gives credence to the monstrous tale,
“ Could bolt a tortoise, and digest a whale.”

Enraged, indignant, thus I make reply,
That things are thus, and give a reason why :

Fair sir, thy keen remonstrances forego,
So runs my tale, because it shall be so ;
And he who thinks I labour to deceive,
Or for a moment dares to disbelieve,
Or springs a doubt, or to another tells,
At such forthwith I throw my cap and bells :
For things, in spite of reason, are believed,
So glad we lend an ear to be deceived :
Hence Gaul's proud monarch, not by genius great,
Owes crown and empire to the whims of fate ;
Hence D*****'s fugitive, by nature wise,
Owes Europe's scorn and laughter to the skies ;
And not a bold objector disallows,
That steaks are cut from Abyssinian cows,
While all unharm'd the living beasts remain,
“ For airy spirits soon unite again ;”
That Fingal's bard could easily divine
What Homer wrote, untutor'd in a line ;
Read Milton's English through futurity,
And plainly saw it how it needs must be ;

And to M'Pherson only, by his will
Bequeath'd his versèd, wit, and gray goose quill.—
Then since our creed in miracles is found
So very yielding, ample, and profound,
Increasing ever with the growing size
Of well-authenticated prodigies ;
He who shall dare to think my tale untrue,
E'en to his very face I call a Jew,
And to his utter grievance be it said,
His brains are pumpkin, and his heart is lead.

If in the heyday of his youth he roves
In Granta's antique walls and silent groves,
Still may the wretch be every day too late
At prosing lecture, chapel, hall, and gate.
Ah no—in useless drudgery may he toil,
And waste the noontide sun and midnight oil ;
Pore o'er the works of commentating men,
Who smoke and write in solid Gottingen ;

In college pent, prolong a drowsy state,
And ever read, and ever vegetate.

If he, who throws discredit on my song,
To the grave stole of priesthood should belong,
I wish him gifted with a leering eye,
And may his wig for ever sit awry ;
A motley jerkin through the lawn be seen,
Of sprightliest colours, yellow, pink, and green ;
To masquerades detected may he run,
And more than once be hooted for a pun—
Or if a reverend judge, in chair of pride
He sit aloft, to listen and decide,
When plaintiff, culprit, court, and jury wait,
To hear his lordship sum the long debate,
May thoughts of faree, so broad and unconfined,
Perch on his pineal gland, and rule his mind,
That he shall make the hearers burst with glee,
At joke, conundrum, riddle, repartee.

But should a lovely hearer be so bold,
Still may the heater of the urn prove cold;
May Shock with nervous symptoms ever shake,
And keep her anxious for her lap-dog's sake;
Perverse cosmetics may the damsel rue,
Her white turn'd saffron, and her rouge turn'd blue,
May not a robe be fitted to her will,
And e'en the black *assassin* * fail to kill;
Or if her spirit burn to mount on high,
In the wild dreams of charming poesy,
Prose, clipp'd and measured out in blank verse page,
And saintly jargon, shall mislead her age,
Or puling sonnet, or remember'd joys,
And sympathies of little girls and boys;

* The assassin is a patch, first invented and worn by the corps of French lady *tirailleurs*. It is worn, I believe, on the left side of the mouth, when it is intended that the victim should sit at the right, and *vice versa*. Thus at a moment's warning, by a slight bend of the head, the work of darkness is perpetrated. Few have ever escaped, who are proscribed by the assassin.

“ How pleased they chased the slipper in its sound,
“ And turned the blindfold hero round and round.”

‘END OF SECOND CANTO.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO THIRD.



THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO THIRD.

Now Selim call'd, the captive in disguise,
By all unmark'd, but fair Zoraida's eyes,
About the garden plied his busy toil,
With spade, or rake, adorn'd the happy soil;
Shook off at early dawn the weight of sloth,
To trim the plants, or shape the pliant growth:
Now with a scythe he mows the level green,
With plantains shaded round, a charming scene;
Now in retiring alleys clips away
The thick'ning boughs that intercept the day,

Or lures the stream to fall in artful showers
Upon the thirsting herbs, and fainting flowers.
So well the courtly labourer play'd his part,
That all who saw admired the servant's art.
His lord, surprised where'er he cast his view,
Could scarce believe the vision to be true;
So quick the garden from a desert thrived,
It seem'd as if by fairy craft contrived.

Here oft would Hamet shun the noontide heat,
To read, or slumber, in the cool retreat;
And as the prophet's fabled joys he read
Of pleasures pleasing still, and never dead,
Of beauteous forms emparadised in bliss,
Ambrosial banquets, and the houri's kiss;
The place so aptly the delusion aids,
With green savannahs, and embowering shades,
That more than half the proffer'd joys he gain'd
On earth, and hardly wish'd for what remain'd;

But wonder'd only to behold around
Such sudden order on the enchanted ground ;
And why a slave, base menial of the soil,
Should thus unceasing in the garden toil ;
A race so prone to idleness and ill,
That whips and tortures take the place of will,
And angry threats their stubbornness constrain,
And bend them down to work against their grain.
Beneath his care the suckers livelier seem'd,
As if the fruitful lap of nature teem'd
More fruitful now : the master own'd his land,
A new creation, from his gard'ner's hand :
Nor fear'd his secret wonder to reveal,
But, lest his vigour droop beneath his zeal,
First praised, and then enjoin'd him to provide
Some other labourers for a field so wide.

A happy end such fair beginning bodes,
A private signal brought the Knight of Rhodes,
Hubert, of strength to wield a giant's sword ;
Another summon'd young Otranto's lord,

The gallant Florio, from Campania's shore ;
A third from France brought gay Sir Eglamour.
All hasten'd, eager as their oath required,
All in a gardener's frock and cap attired ;
All did their best to please, nor more desired.
And as they labour'd in their ladies sight,
Each felt, unknown to each, a new delight.
The ladies too in secret were amazed,
While either on her favourite lover gazed,
Unknown to either—and with eager eyes
Singled him out beneath his mean disguise.
But here suspicions ever waked to vex,
With scowl of obloquy, the tender sex ;
No word could pass unnoted by a crowd
Of prying slaves, who blabb'd it out aloud ;
Unnumber'd foes their motions here enthrall,
Eyes in each bush, and ears in every wall,
That guess from trifles, what they think within,
And turn a whisper, or a smile, to sin.

But every hour, deceitful Selim tries,
By every art, his master to surprise ;
With careful search the mansion he explores,
At eve assails the casement, and the doors ;
And, baffled oft, but obstinate in art,
He plays from day to day a different part :—
A weary pedlar now the house he haunts,
With wares that kindle unremember'd wants ;
A broken soldier now with visage grim,
Sternly he begs, and drags a trailing limb ;
In every shape he tries a daily prank,
A merchant, dervish, saint, and mountebank ;
But every shape more vigilance excites—
And now he scatters wide alarm at nights ;—
First in a nosegay hides a mystic line,
That warns Zoraida of his next design,
And scares the household and the sleeping sire,
With dreadful 'larum, and the cry of fire ;
Who, while abroad they hasten for relief,
Within the house enclose the lurking thief,

Till, as to reach the chamber door he glides,
The tumult ceases, and the fear subsides.
Surprised again, he steers a different course,
And, "thieves!" he halloes till his voice is hoarse;
He runs as if to aid the frightened crew,
Himself the robber and pursuer too.
Baffled again, he now resolves to bound
His field of action to the garden ground;
For, but his simple mien and look demure
Would damp suspicion of a thought impure,
A stricter watch his master seem'd to keep,
So often trick'd by day, and frighten'd in his sleep.

But still of Selim powerful rumour bears
Some new and pleasing art to Hamet's ears,
That, cross'd by changeful fortune, he could tell
Of various climes, and scenes remember'd well,
And to his viol sing in sprightly lays,
The tales of present and of former days;
With equal ease a battle could rehearse,
Or neighbour's gossip, in his copious verse.

The master wondering much that fortune gave
Her various gifts so lavish to a slave,
Petition'd by his daughters, set apart
A day to come, and listen to his art.
Meanwhile the pliant Selim bless'd the wiles
That brought him nearer to Zoraida's smiles,
And strain'd his vivid fancy to invent
Some tale of hazard or light merriment ;
And all the happy interval employs
In dreams of rapture and imagined joys.
A lovely bower he labours to adorn
With nicer care against the expected morn ;
Nor to the spot alone his art confines,
But round his cap a wreath fantastic twines,
With new and gawdy ribands tricks his knees,
As if some rustic lass he meant to please ;
And to the cove, with action debonnair,
Conducts the father and the curious fair.

The mossy seats their lovely limbs invite,
And as they rest on pillows of delight,

Seem'd that no human ill, or sorrow rude,
Could on the calmness of that bower intrude ;
For at their feet abundant nature spread
Her buds of various hue, and o'er their head,
Myrtles, to roses married, shed around
Their pleasing smells, and shadow'd o'er the ground,
With trembling leaves, and canopy of green ;
While, to refresh the air that breathed serene,
From marble urns two crystal fountains play'd,
And sheltering birds lent music to the shade.—
Such sweets below, such varied notes above,
It breath'd, it whisper'd, and it look'd of love.

Meanwhile the comrade knights, who stood
amazed,
And on the goodly show at distance gazed,
Behind the arbour sought a leafy screen,
Where each might listen to the song unseen,
As on the beech of turf the minstrel strung
His warbling viol, and preluding sung—

“ Thy wiles, fair Rosamond, and budding age,
“ That bow’d a monarch to low vassalage;
“ The dainty labyrinth, and silken thread,
“ That brought the stealthy lover to thy bed;
“ That lily bed, on which thy beauty claim’d
“ The prize of lustre, and those lilies shamed,
“ Where fears intrude, lest pleasure’s self should cloy,
“ And add new rapture to the stealth of joy;
“ Their secret vow that echo tells aloud,
“ With blabbing spite, to Eleanor the proud;
“ Then hush’d the lay of merriment, to paint
“ The jealous queen, and Henry’s soft complaint.”

The listening ladies drank with eager ears
The melting tale, and graced it with their tears;
While Alfred, careless, from his minstrelsy,
To steal applause, but from Zoraida’s eye,
Beheld her haply with a blush o’erspread,
Her cheek and bosom tinged with modest red.

Alarm'd, and fearful of offence again,
He changed the venturous tenor of his strain,
To tell of captive damsels, doom'd to pine
In Acre's walls, or sultry Palestine;
Of realms unpeopled by the mournful fights
Of Christian barons, and of Paynim knights;
Of English Richard, Heart of Lion call'd,
A haughty conqueror now, and now enthrall'd;
The wily page, who roam'd in sorry sort
From camp to castle, and from court to court;
And, wandering onward, every realm explored,
By quaint device, to find his captive lord.
Still as he went, the warbling lute he strung,
And, "Richard, oh my King!" he fondly sung,
"Oh Richard, oh my King, what tyrant's hate
"Constrains thee, humbled from thy high estate?
"If pride inspire him, that he still denies
"Thy gracious presence to thy people's eyes,
"Full twenty earls of England's noblest race
"Shall quit their homes for thy sad dwelling place;

“ If avarice tempt the traitor to controul
“ By servile fetters, thy indignant soul,
“ Her gold shall Albion send across the main,
“ And heaps of freighted treasure break thy chain.
“ Oh Richard, oh my King, for thee I stray,
“ Faint, cold, and lonely, saddening on my way,
“ With feeble limbs, and heart that turns to thee,
“ Panting to break thy hard captivity.”

Till, as it chanced, the plaintive numbers fell
Upon the captive listening in his cell;
And when the weary minstrel now was mute,
And oft bedew'd with tears his idle flute
Blaming his art, a murmur seem'd to breathe
Soft on his ear, the prison gate beneath :
“ In me that Richard lives—redeem with gold
“ Your prince enthrall'd by Austrian Leopold.”

Again the harper paused—the fair again
Applaud the skill and cunning of his strain ;
But from their praise averse, he caught the while
More dear applause in mute Zoraida's smile ;

When Hamet thus,—“ Thy songs perchance are
“ good,
“ But song, the wise man saith, is meagre food.
“ Go bid my household slaves the board array,
“ Here will we feast, and listen through the day.”
Glad were the fair, and hardly had he said,
Ere came the household, and the board was spread.
Pigment and dainty conserves to each guest
Were handed round, and juice from citron press’d,
With other juice that must be nameless here,
That reverend muftis quaff in private cheer,
But hold it very sacrilege to pass
To lips profane the bright and saintly glass ;
Whate’er it was beseems not me to think,
But Hamet sure was nothing loth to drink ;
Nor could the prophet’s mandate have suppress’d
The rising joy that flow’d in all his breast.
Zoraida, too, her minstrel knight recruits
With that glad cheer, and spiceries, and fruits ;

And thus in sweet encouragement again
Provoked him onward to a bolder strain.

“ Selim, ’tis well—but travell’d as thou art,
“ Far from thine home, o’er every foreign part,
“ And sent in youth beneath a northern sky,
“ To linger there in hard captivity,
“ Thou sure some longer story canst recite,
“ By Christians taught, of lady, squire, or knight.
“ To us, who never left our narrow home,
“ Forbid mid hateful Christian dogs to roam,
“ Modern, or ancient lay, or feign’d or true,
“ To us whate’er it be, the tale is new.”

Thus cheer’d, and thus refresh’d, the tuneful man
Resumed his warbling viol, and began.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FOURTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FOURTH.

SOON as a kindlier fortune broke my chain,
A gentle bard I met of English strain,
Who by a troubadour instructed long
In all the mysteries of soothing song,
Imbibed his art, and strove himself to file
The rugged accents of his native isle.
Invited o'er his tuneful master came,
Arnaud, the noblest in Provençal fame,
In England, promise-fed he made resort,
And vainly sang to please a sluggish court.

For this return he braved a wintry sky,
To curse their rude unthankfulness, and die ;
But from the world when summon'd to depart,
While pain his body wrung, and grief his heart,
The youth was summon'd to his master's side,
And caught his trembling warnings ere he died.
“ Hear me, good Eustace,” said the dying bard,
And on the mourner fix'd a mild regard,
“ Dream not in thankless England to succeed,
“ Nor hope for wealth, nor honour, as thy meed ;
“ Give o'er thine art, and break thy idle lute—
“ Or if thy soul deny thee to be mute,
“ Seek friendlier hearers far removed from hence,
“ In sunny Burgundy, or gay Provence ;
“ There shalt thou pour a well-requited lay,
“ Smiles, riches, honour shall the song repay.
“ I tell thee, Eustace, sooner shall the breath
“ Return to warm this body cold in death ;
“ Sooner shall heaven's avenging thunderbolt
“ Against the hand that lances it, revolt ;

“ Sooner shall oaks the purple grape display,
“ Or roses, acorns, or a southern ray
“ O’er Britain shed a Languedocian spring,
“ Than wake to song a dull and niggard king.
“ Eustace, farewell—one warning ere we part,
“ Which look thou treasure ever in thy heart ;
“ Whate’er thy fortune—and misgives my mind,
“ Or fortune eyes thee with a look unkind—
“ Whatever fate be thine, or doom’d to roam
“ A wandering bard, or happy in a home,
“ Despised or honour’d, in thine art be proud,
“ Nor sing to please a base and rabble crowd ;
“ Nor virtue in her steepy path to snare,
“ Nor with dishonest trifles win the fair.”

He said, and died—the youth attentive hung
On the last sound of aged Arnaud’s tongue.
Him, as he journey’d from his native soil,
Sore grieving at an unrequited toil,
I met, and as we sought a happier clime,
He soothed our tedious travel with his rhyme.

Full many a tale the wandering minstrel wrought
Of strange adventure, and of tender thought,
That made the charmed hearer fancy-led,
And whisper'd solace to the heart that bled.
Which oft, when resting in some thick retreat,
To slake our thirst, and shun the southern heat,
He would recite—and I remember well,
That on my ear one lay so sweetly fell,
That by oft listening to the song alone,
I caught the minstrel's cadence, air, and tone ;
And could repeat, so ye would lend an ear,
The tender theme that oft I loved to hear.
The ladies smile the wandering gardener caught,
And sang the lay by wandering Eustace taught.

Lay of Iolante, by Eustace.

AGAIN return the flowering seasons, prime

For sweetest fragrance, on their buxom wing
Warm breezes float; and stranger to our clime

The sun relenting gives another spring,
Quickening each heart to pleasance like the time,
The youth to wanton, and the bard to sing.

Me too it cheers, and bids my pulses beat,
With healthful temper and enlivening heat.

2.

My tuneful brothers waken'd by the scene,

Each to his bonnibelle some tale recites,
How by the gleamy moon-light faintly seen,

Light elves and fairies, quaint and merry sprites,
Gambol and dance their ringlets on the green,

And trick dull mortals on their road by nights;
But I must sing to fill an aching void,
From seasons gone in vain, and unenjoy'd.

3.

Backward I turn, and when I view the past,
As on a livid lake I fix my eyes,
Gloomy, but troubled by no dangerous blast,
The dull and lazy space behind me lies :
Before me spreads a drear and wintry waste,
And deeps unsounded, and o'erclouding skies ;
To the blank past most gladly would I fly,
From storms that threat in dire futurity.

4.

Fain would I couch upon a careless bed
In idle sloth to hush my soul's unrest,
Fain would I fly to pleasure, but instead
Heart-fretting pain for ever claims my breast.
Hope, memory, glory, all to me are dead,
Or rise by flashes to delude at best.
School me, just heavens, to bear the grievous weight,
Though bruised to conquer, and outscorn my fate.

5.

Yet grant me, heavens, and I will call ye kind,
 (Though hovell'd, cruel poverty, with thee
I yield a wither'd blade to every wind,)
 To know the dreams of heavenly poesy ;
That no dark visitation cloud my mind,
 And fancy's cell be unimpair'd and free.
Enough—while fancy lives triumphant yet,
Flow on, my song, and teach me to forget.

6.

Mild stream'd the moon on Uza's battle-vale ;
 And drowsily Rosalia's vesper bell
Chimed through the abbey cloisters dim and pale ;
 When sickening as she view'd her dreary cell,
The solemn sisterhood, and shrouding veil,
 With courage unconfirm'd that rose and fell,
Bright Iolante from her convent fled,
And Uza's walls, that thrill'd her soul with dread.

7.

She fled through places frightful and obscure,
A barren desert, and a pathless wood,
By streams that roll'd their lazy tides impure
With human corpses, and distain'd with blood ;
And all in vain her wounded heart to cure,
She sought in distant solitude to brood,
Unharm'd by men, o'er griefs that tore her mind,
The hate of bitter foes, the scorn of friends unkind.

8.

And o'er the field of carnage as she pass'd,
On the foul scene she turn'd a shuddering view,
Wives on their gasping husbands look'd their last,
And from their foreheads wiped the deathly dew ;
While orphans yet their clay-cold sires embraced,
Or from the wounded caught a faint adieu,
And vow'd compliance with some fond request,
'That soothes the dying man, and ushers him to rest.

9.

Some o'er the field of havoc and affright

With pious toil inhumed their kindred slain ;

Some, all regardless of the fearful sight,

For villain booty prowled about the plain ;

Pale brands and torches shot a quivering light

Upon the scene of plunder, death, and pain.

Scared at each dreaded look and mournful sound,

Alone she hurried o'er the unhappy ground.

10.

And through a quiet thicket as she went,

Piercing the gloom, she saw a faggot glare,

Where, sitting by a solitary tent,

A beldam cooked her miserable fare ;

The hag her eyes upon the journeyer bent,

And thus with civil speech accosted fair,—

“ Sweet daughter, sad and piteous is thy plight,

“ That here thou wanderest lonely in the night.

11.

“ This place but ill befits a holy maid,
“ Where wicked thieves, they say, in ambush lie ;
“ Yet here, though stranger to this woodland shade,
“ I rest secure in age and poverty ;
“ And would'st thou deign accept my humble aid,
“ Taste of my meal, and on my pallet lie,
“ Take shelter here—and at the peep of day,
“ Myself will be companion of thy way.”

12.

Marvell'd the maid such tenderness to find
In savage place, and woman lone and poor,
Her courteous language she repaid in kind ;
But hardly entered in the tented door,
Ere in a rusty shirt of mail reclined,
She saw a ruffian on the leafy floor ;
She saw aghast, and shrieking wild with dread,
'Turn'd from the guilty den, and forward fled.

13.

To seize her prey, the filthy beldame flew—
 (One winged with fear, and one with plunder keen,)
And, as she ran, a piercing signal blew,
 To call the grim banditti from their screen.
Scarce had it sounded, ere the summons drew
 A horseman plunging from his covert green,
In iron cap, and squalid mail array'd,
Who cross'd her path, and stopped the flying maid.

14.

Leaping to earth, he straight began explore
 Her ruby cross, and rosary as she stood ;
And quick the mantle from her shoulder tore,
 And rifled all from sandal up to hood.
Yet for a while his villain hand forbore
 The holy things to sully with her blood ;
Or stain her honour, till he first had bound
The spoil, that loosely scatter'd strew'd the ground ;

15

On which as yet his greedy avarice hung,
The naked maid, who, like a quivering reed,
Trembled alone, with desperate panic, sprung
Forth from the thief upon his grazing steed.
About his shaggy mane and pummel clung
Her lily arms ; while, frightened into speed,
The beast through copse and greenwood hurried
blind,
And left the ruffian's curses far behind.

16.

And naked had she gone—but fortune drew
A chieftain muffled in his mantle's shade ;
“ Fair sir, in pity, turn away thy view,
“ But give thy robe to clothe a wretch,” she said.
The stranger knight in haste his mantle threw,
Nor aught remained to parley with the maid,
Who, breathing from her heart's alarm again,
Pursued her journey o'er a level plain.

17

She journey'd on—and now a glimmering light
Purpled the heav'n, and every mountain peak;
Creation burst upon her wilder'd sight,
And morning breezes fann'd her sickly cheek:
Joy waked the world—but stranger to delight,
Her bosom swell'd within, and seem'd to break;
While with complaining she arraign'd the skies,
Half inly thought, and half pronounced in sighs.

18.

Bade they obedient nature laugh so gay,
Gave they the stream, sweet glen, and breathing
gale;
The seasons interchange, and night and day,
And earth, her morning incense to exhale
From flowers and ruddy fruits in rich array,
With kindly smells and juices to regale;
To make a vault of penance and despair,
A prison-house of things so good and fair?

19.

While thus she mused, her slow and idle steed
A pasture sought, with early dew besprent;
Where softly trickled through a pleasant mead,
Cooling the silken herbage as it went,
A fountain friendly to the journeyer's need,
And sweet to soothe her night's long dreariment.
She left her horse, and piercing the retreat,
Reclined her limbs upon a mossy seat.

20.

She quaff'd the wave, and rested in the shade,
Where wanton eglantine and jasmine grew;
The year was in its youth—and flowers display'd
Their buds of various breath and liveliest hue;
With sickening heart around her look'd the maid,
For well I ween the silent haunt she knew;
Where with Valence in happier hour she ranged,
And thoughts and vows of constant love exchanged.

21.

And all those happy hours again return,
Reviewed again in bitterness of thought ;
The same pale willow, and low-stealing burn
Enjoyed and promised days to memory brought.
Here let her rest, while to the past I turn,
And tell what cause her present misery wrought,
Why broke Valence the plighted vow, and left,
Whom late he loved, of every joy bereft.

22.

So true, so constant was their mutual flame,
It seemed by heaven inspired to make them blest ;
Nor ever till the morn of spousal came,
Had aught of ill disturb'd their happy rest ;
That morning tinged an honest cheek with shame,
And banished peace from Lolante's breast.
From that sad morn, Valence, a wanderer, sought
In fighting fields to cure his aching thought.

23.

The bridal pomp, 'twere tedious to relate ;
Youths on the road their jovial garlands shower'd,
And blithe the galliards throng'd the castle gate,
And joyful vassals to the chapel pour'd ;
The blushing bride appear'd in costly state,
Nor aught was wanting but the Gascon lord.
But he, who most had heightened their delight,
Valence alone, was absent from the rite.

24.

Yet still, in token of the nuptial day,
The lyre rang wild, and warbled soft the lute ;
And still around the guests in fair array,
Gave and return'd the timid bride's salute ;
Till through the crowd Fitztraver made his way,
And turn'd the joy to sadness blank and mute ;
Loved by the valiant, and renown'd the most
Of Gascon chivalry, and England's host.

25.

Friend of Valence, they battled many a year,
Nor peace, nor war, the comrades could divide ;
Around the thronging audience press to hear
What hap detain'd the Baron from his bride.
Pale was his cheek, and now upon the cheer,
He look'd with grief, and now with sullen pride.
A scroll was in his hand—above the crowd,
Towering in might, he stood, and read aloud :—

26.

“ Wait ye Valence ?—in covert of the night,
“ Valence went forth in glittering arms array'd,
“ To cure, in travel, and tumultuous fight,
“ The wound inflicted by a faithless maid ;
“ And ere he went, the traitress to requite,
“ This scroll he left her treason to upbraid.
“ List every Gascon, every English fair,
“ This from the bridegroom to his guests I bear.

27.

“Greetings to all—to Iolante joy—

“And in her new-found paramour’s caress,

“Still may she taste of pleasures till they cloy,

“Still wake at morn to sprightly wantounness;

“Ne’er shall Valence her tender hour annoy,

“For ill he brooks a leman’s lip to press;

“To strain her bosom, flush’d with fierce desire,

“And woo her burning with another’s fire.”

28.

Merciful heaven! why dwells not in a face,

Some mark the hidden bosom to reveal,

That we might know the generous from the base,

From eye, or forehead, stamp’d with nature’s seal?

For well the secret virtues we may trace,

Of root, or herb, of gold, or temper’d steel;

And safe amid the flocks we roam, but fly

The glare of tyger’s, or nyæna’s eye.

29.

Yet oft in bright or sombre garb attired,
In seeming oft of gray and holy truth,
In rude and plain simplicity admired,
Or glowing in the rosy light of youth ;
Most dangerous then, when most from view retired,
Lurks calumny with black despiteous tooth ;
And often blushing at an evil name,
The modest cheek is tinged with hue of shame.

30.

Changed was the bride from red to deadly pale,
That foul dishonour should her name attain ;
And shuddering at the slander's subtle bale,
Her drooping spirits fell subdued and faint ;
Her swoon gave credence to the slanderous tale,
The ladies shriek'd aloud—with wild complaint
Her kindred sorrow'd, that such vile disgrace,
From daughter so beloved, should blight their race.

31.

And ever since that melancholy morn,
Outcast from all that to her heart was dear,
The pride of ladies once, but now the scorn,
Without a friend her dismal plight to cheer ;
Her parents hid her hopeless and forlorn,
Retired from man's rebuke, and woman's sneer ;
From haughty kindred's curse, and angry mood,
In converse with a holy sisterhood.

32.

There warm in love, she fed her secret pain,
Unfit in cloister'd solitudes to sigh,
And wearied quickly, sought to break the chain,
That bound her youth to fruitless sanctity.
But though her bosom swell'd with proud disdain,
Vainly she strove the hated spot to fly ;
And yet a novice in the convent pined,
With eyes to heav'n, and heart to man resign'd.

33.

And still had mourn'd the world's exile, and sigh'd
In vain to meet her sad and wandering lord ;
To change the name of novice for a bride,
And live no more by human kind abhorr'd ;
But fortune veer'd, and war's relentless tide
Round Uza's gates and monasteries pour'd,
And all Rosalia's priests and holy maids
Fled to their shrines, and trembled in their shades.

34.

Fierce Marcel's plundering hordes the realm invade,
Of garish look, of every speech and clan ;
Wide o'er Guienne they ply their villain trade,
Nor cross, nor lily, blazes in their van ;
But on a sable banner was display'd,
" The friends of God, and enemies to man"—
And Uza's castled walls with mingled tone,
Ring to the wild marauders' warison.—

35.

Long time her knights the fierce assault withstood,
And deep her trench, and high her bulwark tower'd;
Where Gascon youths, and English archers good
Their iron deaths upon the brigands shower'd.
Yet had they fainted in the conflict rude,
And from the press of thousands sunk o'erpower'd,
But that two friendly pennons met their view,
That cheer'd their hearts, and strung their arms
anew.

36.

Beneath a silver griffin streaming light,
Fitztraver led his English to the fray;
A bounding hart bespoke the Gascon knight—
Around their men in arms in long array
Through the wide champaign pour the tide of fight,
And, ere in ocean sunk the lamp of day,
Pale Uza's children heard with sudden glee,
The mingled sounds of peace and victory.—

37.

But never shall Rosalia's vesper chime
 Call Iolante to the chapel's gloom ;
For when her gates were oped at needful time,
 To shrieve the wounded and the dead entomb,
The lovely maid, who languish'd in her prime,
 To taste the breathing fields and vernal bloom,
Left her dark cell, and shrouded by the night
Forth to the jovial arboret bent her flight.

38.

“ And hail, dear spot,” she said, “ where every tree
 “ Still buds the same, of happy love the token ;
“ Where yet, Valence, again I picture thee,
 “ And hear again thy vows of rapture spoken ;
“ Grant me within thy covert to be free,
 “ Though faint my limbs, my heart with anguish
 broken,
“ And soothe awhile the sorrows of my breast,
“ And lull their sense to momentary rest ;

39.

“ For I must wander, ere the day shall close,
“ Full many a league unfriended and alone,
“ In search of him from whom my joy arose,
“ From whom estranged, unheard I make my
 moan,
“ By truth to blunt the malice of my foes,
“ And call, whom fond affection join’d, my own.”
She said—and turn’d her to the scene around
The lucid waters, and enchanting ground.

40.

Where as it fortun’d, while at early dawn,
Free from the dismal monastery’s vows,
She sate and rested on the mossy lawn,
Well joy’d to see the woodland cattle browse ;
She heard, but deeper in the bower withdrawn,
Sweet notes, that wildly rung amid the boughs ;
Sometimes they linger’d with a plaintive swell,
And with the sighing zephyr rose and fell—

41.

Half resting on her arm, aside, before,
She sought to find the instrument of sound ;
When on the branch of an old sycamore,
That all the stream and neighbouring plants im-
brown'd,
A lyre she saw, that hung the water o'er,
And underneath a written record found,
In Tuscan rhyme and character, design'd
To hide from vulgar carls the writer's mind :—

42.

“ There hang, my lyre—this idle hand no more
“ In these calm vales shall bid thee to complain ;
“ How glad I tuned your silver chords before,
“ When she, my all of life, approved my strain !
“ But now more glad I seek the battle's roar,
“ And in rude discord lose the sense of pain ;
“ Therefore, farewell—these quiet shades among,
“ Some happier knight may wake thee to his song.”

43.

Thrice o'er the mystic scroll she read, and wept,
Till from a night of terror and unrest,
Calm slumber o'er her jaded spirits crept,
And razed out sorrow's record from her breast ;
Propt on an antique root in peace she slept—
Birds, waters, lend their music to her rest ;
Till ere the sun his mid-day course had ran,
She heard the plainings of a mournful man :

44.

And on the moss beheld a chieftain lie,
As if but late the battle he forsook ;
One while he seem'd to gaze on vacancy,
Now mute and mournful pored upon a book ;
Now rapt in mazy reasoning, bent his eye
On the calm mirror of that chrystal brook :
His steed unbridled ranged the flowery field,
And on a beech were hung his helmet, glaive, and
shield.

45.

And thus with plaintive voice he fill'd the shade ;

“ How vain is wisdom, and how weak the wise,

“ Who, when o'erwhelming ills our peace invade,

“ From open foes, or ambush'd enemies,

“ Our faint and shuddering nature would persuade,

“ Alike to hold our joys and miseries :

“ Nor comfort in a kindly tear to seek

“ From the full heart, when sorrow bids it break !

46.

“ Nor wiser they, who bid affections sleep,

“ And from a loathed world retiring haste ;

“ For e'en in glooms unpierceable and deep,

“ Intrudes the keen remembrance of the past ;

“ Nor they who would in toil their memory steep

“ In peaceful stole, or horrid armour braced,

“ For every interval that gives repose,

“ Feeds the foul weed, that poisons as it grows.

47.

- “ For I have fought, the terror of the plain,
“ From clime to clime my hands with blood im-
 brued ;
“ Rise, spirits of the brave in manhood slain,
“ And, captives, burst your bonds of servitude.
“ Blush for your conqueror now, and with disdain
“ Behold him low on earth, by grief subdued ;
“ Blush for the man who lately caused your fears,
“ With more than woman’s weakness bathed in tears.

48.

- “ But thou, false maid, with deeper blushes glow,
“ Source of my wanderings thou, and wayward
 deeds,
“ For whom in vain my idle sorrows flow,
“ As day to day with silent tread succeeds ;
“ For whom I rove and sicken as I go,
“ And languish of a wound that inly bleeds :
“ And heav’n reserves me yet from battle free,
“ To feel the stroke of death from only thee.

49.

- “ Thy answering smile with rapture made me blest ,
“ Pure as the joys of happy souls above ;
“ Thy faithless treason stole me from my rest,
“ From home and friends a banish’d man to rove :
“ But yet thy form is imaged in my breast,
“ And warms again my frozen heart to love ;
“ And as I give the lovely shape a name,
“ By tears unquench’d I feed the living flame.

50.

- “ A tender maid is like a floweret sweet,
“ Within the covert of a garden born ;
“ Nor flock, nor hind, disturb the calm retreat,
“ But on the parent stalk it blooms untorn,
“ Refresh’d by vernal rains and gentle heat,
“ The balm of evening, and the dews of morn :
“ Youths, and enamour’d maidens, vie to wear
“ This flower, their bosom’s grace, or curl’d around
their hair :

51.

- “ No sooner gather’d from the vernal bough,
“ Where fresh and blooming to the sight it grew,
“ Than all who mark’d its opening beauty blow,
“ Forsake the tainted sweet and faded hue.
“ And she who yields, forgetful of her vow,
“ To one but newly loved, another’s due,
“ Shall live,(though high for heav’nly beauty prized,)
“ By youths unhonour’d, and by maids despised.

52.

- “ Oh, Iolante ! what so fair a flower
“ Was ever fair, was ever pure like thee ?
“ Oh, Iolante ! what malignant power
“ Has made another rich, and rifled me ?
“ I saw thy beauties ripening every hour,
“ And when I hail’d my happy destiny,
“ A stranger came, and gather’d for his own
“ The rose I fondly mark’d for mine alone.

53.

“ Since when with helmet, brand, and battle-spear,
“ Far from the pleasance of his native bounds,
“ Far from those eyes that wont his heart to cheer,
“ Mid sights of havoc, and unseemly wounds,
“ Valence has journey’d through the tedious year,
“ Till call’d to combat for his country’s grounds ;
“ And on that verdant marge reclines again,
“ Once known with joy, remember’d now with pain.

54.

“ Fair winding vale, and thou delicious stream,
“ Enchanting birds, and beasts that haunt the plain ;
“ And thou green path, where fondly yet I dream
“ To mark some print of her, beloved in vain !
“ Unalter’d yet, and fresh to me ye seem,
“ And smile, as in rebuke upon my pain ;
“ No likeness to my happy self I find
“ In these dim eyes, in this distemper’d mind.

55.

“ But if from rest and happiness to fly,
“ And all that once I languish’d to behold,
“ If my heart’s image painted in my eye,
“ Or grief, in stifled accents hardly told,
“ If ever to complain, to weep, to sigh,
“ Another dearer than myself to hold;
“ Feed on my wither’d frame, the guilt is thine,
“ False fair, but ever be the suffering mine.”

56.

While thus he plain’d aloud, the mournful maid,
Her secret bed within the arbour kept;
There deeply hid amid the leafy shade,
She heard in silence, and in silence wept.
No sob, no sigh, no word her grief betray’d,
A leaden stupor o’er her senses crept,
Through which the chieftain’s voice and figure seem
Like sights that melt, and murmurs in a dream.

57.

She strove to rise, but anguish chill'd her blood,
And while her hands in mute despair she wrung,
A jaded steed came lagging through the wood,
On which a bleeding champion feebly clung:
Valence, awaken'd from his pensive mood,
In haste to aid the fainting warrior sprung;
And softly laid him on the mossy ground,
And at the runnel bathed his gory wound.

58.

Then looking in his visage pale and grim,
Scarce could Valence endure the galling sight;
For from those eyes that dull and rayless swim,
He knew Fitztraver in the bleeding knight:
Faint, cold, and shuddering, fell his length of limb,
And shiver'd was his brand that ruled the fight;
And by his actions, utterance was express'd,
Some hidden thought lay heavy at his breast.

59.

Upon his arm he bore a nun's attire,
Rosalia's vestal hood, and convent stole,
Which ever as he press'd, with vital fire
His dreary eye-balls seem'd again to roll ;
A rosary too he kiss'd with vain desire,
As if that kiss were comfort to his soul ;
And as the holy things his pain beguiled,
He clasp'd them to his gushing wound, and smiled,

60.

“ Brother in arms,” exclaim'd his Gascon friend,
“ Tell, if thou canst, (for nought but treason durst,)
“ What deed of darkness brings thee to thy end,
“ What coward stab, and from what hand accurst ?”
To the sweet fount Fitzstraver strove to bend,
As if for water to assuage his thirst ;
And as a sudden lightning o'er him past,
These words he spoke, the saddest and the last :—

61.

“ But yesternight, as through the wood I fared,
“ I met a damsel naked and alone,
“ As if but newly by pursuers scared,
“ Who begg’d my mantle with a piteous tone ;
“ These are the robes of which the plunderer bared
“ That mournful lady not to thee unknown ;
“ For these fair letters, broidered by her art,
“ Reveal a name the nearest to thy heart.

62.

“ Look on this gown, Rosalia’s meek array,
“ But yesternight by Iolante worn ;
“ A ruffian tore the precious spoil away,
“ And left her naked, weeping, and forlorn.
“ I traced the villain, and redeem’d the prey,
“ But in his ambush fell at early morn ;
“ And wounded by the lawless company,
“ I live but thus to tell thee ere I die.

63.

“ Now by the heav’n, that I despair to find,
“ Fair as her form is Iolante’s name;
“ Thy jealous love a traitor sought to blind,
“ And for himself thy rightful prize to claim;
“ And he whose wicked art estranged thy mind,
“ And breathed a canker on her honest fame,
“ E’en he, that villain wretch, before thee lies,
“ And loves her, though he gasps in agonies.

64.

“ And when she met my bosom’s ardour cold,
“ By lengthen’d service hopeless to prevail,
“ Lest her chaste form another should enfold,
“ Furious in ill I forged a traitor’s tale;
“ Her venal damsels I secured with gold,
“ To spread the story of her bitter bale,
“ And yet I strain her vest, and think with pride,
“ That, ere I die, thou canst not call her bride.

65.

“ For, oh ! I love her, though before my age,
“ I shed my glories to a vulgar hand;
“ And could I now my feverish thirst assuage
“ With water pour’d by Iolante’s hand,
“ My failing voice should bless the villain rage
“ That pierced my bosom with his ruffian brand,
“ Nor can I, dying, at my guilt repine,
“ But that I sinn’d, and fail’d to make her mine.”

66.

He could no more—for dizzy was his sight,
And sharp his pain, and fresh his death wound
flow’d ;
When, as a seraph in celestial flight
Tips with his silver plume a bursting cloud,
From the black gathering storm restoring light,
Fair Iolante from her leafy shroud,
Unheard along the fountain margin ran,
And smiled forgiveness on the dying man.

67.

And all so gently dried the trembling dew,
Such kindly solace tender'd to his pain,
That e'en Valence was melted at the view,
And turn'd to pity from his high disdain ;
Nor longer thought him faithless and untrue,
But saw him loyal, valiant, good again ;
Nor ever once rebuked the pious maid,
But kneeling lent an unavailing aid.

68.

Death dull and heavy on Fitztraver hung ;
But when he felt such dear attendance nigh,
More close to Iolante's neck he clung,
And grasp'd the stole of meek St Rosalie :
" Be happy," seem'd to say his failing tongue,
And ere dim vision quite forsook his eye,
Signing to close his lids, in one he press'd
The hand of friend and love, and sank to rest.

The end of the Lay of Iolante.

Sad was the tale ; a tear was seen to pace,
Bright, cold, and gentle, down Zoraida's face ;
The minstrel mark'd it, and, but awed by fear,
Had with his lips dispell'd the pious tear.

“ Selim,” she said, “ thy mournful themes excite

“ A holy calm, more soothing than delight.

“ Well hast thou said, that Eustace could impart

“ A healing balsam to the bleeding heart.

“ The fatal rivalry, the villain friend,

“ And constant love rewarded in its end,

“ Well has the youthful troubadour display'd,

“ And held in honour reverend Arnaud's shade ;

“ For in his lay, when wicked men defame

“ Fair virtue's cause, and put the good to shame,

“ In sooth, 'tis sweet, 'tis passing sweet, to hear

“ How heaven and truth are arm'd to make them
clear.

“ Eustace, though wanderer in thy youthful age,

“ Some other land may yield thee harbourage ;

“ And though it shun the noontide of thy day,

“ Late honour haply shall reward thy lay,

“ Unfruitful lustre o’er thy evening shed,
“ Or like a grave lamp burn to light the dead.”

END OF CANTO FOURTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FIFTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO FIFTH.

HIGH joy'd the knight in every lady's praise,
For all but Hamet smiled upon his lays ;
Such fair acceptance of his tuneful art
Wing'd every pulse with life, and warm'd his heart.
Though faint his voice, by friendly greetings fired,
Still could he sing, as one by song untired ;
Yet had discouragement of cold remark
Stole on his numbers, or a whisper dark,
Or sidelong glance of an ill-omen'd eye,—
It sure had marr'd his swelling minstrelsy.

But Hamet's brow such drowsiness o'erspread,
That on the moss the good man laid his head,
While in his ear the lay imperfect rung,
And gently slumber'd while the minstrel sung ;
But when the pausing sound his slumber broke,
He rubb'd his heavy eye-lids, yawn'd, and spoke :—
“ Beshrew thy Eustace, and his story too,
“ And Iolante and her knight beshrew ;
“ Thy hateful crone, thy fight at Uza's wall,
“ Rosalia, fountain, bower,—beshrew them all !
“ More heard I not ; by heavy sleep oppress'd,
“ Ten trumpets hardly had disturb'd my rest.
“ A maid gone out at night to take the air,
“ Nor why, nor wherefore !—faith 'tis lenten fare.
“ I tell thee, friend, another must thou find
“ In better hour more suited to my mind ;
“ And mark thy plot be cunning, quaint, and good,
“ And see thy knight and dame be flesh and blood,—
“ No ancient legend, whining, dull, and stale,—
“ I tell thee, throw some salt upon the tale ;

“ Some wily incident, unhackney’d yet,
“ That I may hear awake, and ne’er forget.
“ But first, I charge thee, brim again the bowl,
“ To cheer thy spirits, and enlarge thy soul ;
“ For this grave truth my memory ever keeps,
“ Taught by my sire, who with his fathers sleeps :
“ ‘ Whene’er,’ he said, (and yet I seem to hear
“ His warning voice in accents sweet and clear,)
“ ‘ Fair son, whene’er thy wit is dull with use,
“ Be timely wise, nor spare the enlivening juice.’
“ He said ; and hence, in honour to his name,
“ I ever hold in reverence that same.”

He spoke, nor fail’d he of his own accord
With good example to enforce the word ;
The harper smiled, and by his patron moved,
The sage advice and solemn truth approved ;
Then to another lay applied his mind,
And ponder’d long, nor yet a lay could find ;

For this too dull for Hamet might appear,
And that perhaps unmeet for ladies' ear.
Till now, by soft approving beauty bold,
Of fair Zoraida and himself he told,
And all unmark'd, but as a tale gone by
Retraced in song their true love's history ;
Her eye, her brow, as ivory smooth and fair ;
Her angel lip, and hyacinthine hair ;
With each peculiar grace, so nicely true
To breathing nature and herself he drew,
That all the portrait in the shade had known,
But for the name intended for her own.
The name, to Isabelle exchanged, convey'd
The hidden meaning to the living maid ;
And Alfred, turn'd to Theodore, conceal'd
The youth, to nought but prying love reveal'd.

Himself he sang beneath a tyrant's power,
And eyes that sparkled through the grated tower

Cheering his eve, and signs and whispers soft,
That in mild evening soothed him from aloft.
Pleased with his theme, in light and tricksome mood
The guileful Alfred thus his tale pursued:—

“ Hard fate was Theodore’s,—to camps inured,
“ Hazard and war his boyish age endured,
“ Toss’d in the many fortunes of the times,
“ From temperate heavens to hot and sickly climes;
“ Now the sweet link of friendship he enjoy’d,
“ Now with rude hordes in islands waste and void;
“ Ere to the ripeness of man’s years he came,
“ To timeless age he wore his youthful frame;
“ Yet e’en in thralldom stranger to despair,
“ Tortured by men, befriended by the fair,
“ While love and pity cheer’d his lonely cell
“ From thy fair eyes, delightful Isabelle.

“ Now, ladies gay, full gladly you attend
“ Your lowly minstrel to his story’s end,—

“ How love was crown’d, and Theodore set free
“ From servile toil and hard captivity;
“ For that you wish the loving pair success,
“ From all your looks and whispers well I guess.

“ This Theodore, though train’d to rugged fight,
“ Yet was in sooth a gentle, courteous knight,
“ Who, when at eve the busy camp was still,
“ In music exercised his happy skill,
“ Till the sweet art, by studious zeal obtain’d,
“ That soothed his thralldom, now his freedom gain’d.
“ And oft the lovely Isabelle would deign
“ To listen and applaud the minstrel’s strain.
“ But as old Guzman with suspicious care
“ For ever tended on his daughter fair,
“ The youth, who deem’d that ever thus to sigh,
“ Though very loving, was exceeding dry,
“ Contrived a virelay in careless guise
“ To woo the fair before the dotard’s eyes.

Song to Isabelle.**1.**

“ My vessel is gallant, and smooth is the wave,
“ My crew and my comrades are faithful and brave,
“ Be to-morrow the day, and bright noontide the
 hour,
“ Then prepared for escape let us enter the bower;
“ And lest our departure thy father delay,
“ My art shall beguile him, and lead him away.
“ Then, lady, to fly if thy heart be resign’d,
“ Leave a ring for a token revealing thy mind.

2.

“ For scantly my finger shall stray o’er my lyre
“ Ere a stranger shall enter, and baffle thy sire,
“ And raising his forehead ensem’d with a scar,
“ Shall rumour of tumult, and havoc of war,
“ With a tale of false import shall break his repose,
“ And lead him from home to encounter his foes.

“ Then, lady, to fly if thy heart be resign’d,
“ Leave a ring for a token revealing thy mind.

3.

“ Then away with thy lover, and trust to the gale,
“ That auspicious to love shall embosom the sail;
“ No storm shall imperil thy course o’er the flood,
“ But sweet halcyons shall murmur thee bodements
 of good ;
“ Unharm’d by rude breakers thy vessel shall urge,
“ While the breezes but warble, and ripple the surge :
“ Then, lady, to fly if thy heart be resign’d,
“ Leave a ring for a token revealing thy mind.

4.

“ Nor deem that I woo thee away from thy home
“ O’er waters, unfathom’d, fair lady, to roam,
“ In some pitiless region to make thy retreat,
“ By winter ingloom’d, or distemper’d by heat ;

“ For gay are our vallies that laugh to the beams,
“ Where the fruitage is glowing, and healthful the
 streams.
“ Then, lady, to fly if thy heart be resign’d,
“ Leave a ring for a token revealing thy mind.

5.

“ And brave are our knights, and our ladies are fair,
“ The courteous, the grave, and the noble are there ;
“ And the courteous, and noble, and grave shall agree,
“ When they gaze on thy charms, to do homage to
 thee ;
“ While the love that began in the dawn of our prime
“ Shall be nurtured in silence, and foster’d by time.
“ Then, lady, to fly if thy heart be resign’d,
“ Leave a ring for a token revealing thy mind.

“ Thus Theodore ;—the sire applauded high
“ The minstrel’s art, and deem’d his minstrelsy

“ But as an antique legend handed down,
“ Nor dreaded danger from a seeming clown.
“ Not so the fair ; for oft a look she stole
“ That to the rustic knight reveal’d her soul ;
“ She hail’d a warrior in a slave’s disguise,
“ And smiled approval with her answering eyes.

“ Dear is the stealth of love—the whisper dear
“ That breathes the thought of lovers, when they fear,
“ When rapture ventures, and suspicion chains,
“ And dread with fond desire the fight maintains.
“ All eloquence is theirs,—the varying cheek,
“ Eye, limb, and changeful feature, learn to speak ;
“ Nor more their ways of utterance, than to know
“ The hidden heart from eye, or speaking brow ;
“ For well each new emotion they divine,
“ And read a wish in every mystic sign,
“ While from the vulgar crowd they hide their fires,
“ And in cold greetings mask their warm desires.

“ To end my tale ;—the master liked the strain,
“ And on the morrow vow’d to hear again,
“ Then with his daughter from the harbour went,
“ Who left a ring, the token of consent.
“ To-morrow came,—again the sire approved
“ The song that robb’d him of the maid beloved,
“ And, ere in heaven declined the noontide sun,
“ The stranger enter’d, and the maid was won.”

Thus Alfred sang ;—but oft his numbers fail’d,
And oft in turn, as hope and fear prevail’d,
Their wonted power his quivering lips forsook,
And all his frame with sudden tremor shook ;
More wan than lover’s paleness was his cheek,
His fingers marr’d the tune, subdued and weak.
But Alfred’s fear in silence now be past,
While to the tenor of my tale I haste.

Happy the youths ; for each believed the song
In truth could only to himself belong,

And fain would think his lady had reveal'd
To Selim's ear his story, deeply seal'd
By vows address'd to all the stars above,
And hail'd the blameless perjury of love.
Happy the maids; for each, to each unknown,
Believed the fate of Isabelle her own,
And for herself the flight intended thought
By schemes the subtle gardener's mind had wrought.
And Hamet too, (though doom'd to lose his rest,)
Yet in a short-lived ignorance was bless'd,
The tale with unsuspecting laughter broke,
And more than all enjoy'd the wicked joke,
Made comments on the song, in wanton freak,
That summon'd blood to every lady's cheek;
Then jesting with his slave,—“ I know,” quoth he,
“ The fickle things—they ne'er impose on me.
“ Thy guardian, mark me, was a very ass
“ To trust the slippery sex, more frail than glass;
“ Who, when their souls are ardent to enjoy
“ The witless passion of some whining boy,

“ Changing at will their features, air, and shape,
“ Through locks and bars and prison gates escape.
“ Not to my females, but myself I trust ;
“ To give them dangerous freedom were unjust ;
“ Permitted scarcely from my sight a span,
“ I give them leave to run whene’er they can.
“ For that they *will* is plain ; but *can* as soon
“ As make the ocean blaze, or quench the moon.
“ Not e’en a wish can in their bosoms rise,
“ Nor thought unnoted by my piercing eyes,
“ That through the veil of cunning look within,
“ And crop the bud before it grows to sin.
“ How say ye girls ?”

The damsels all admire

The foresight of their venerable sire ;
Another Argus he, as if composed
Of countless eyes, and ears that never closed ;
Then rising from their benches, condescend
To thank the minstrel at his story’s end.

But most the sire extoll'd the minstrel's art,
The sire, who most of all had cause to smart ;
How different his from Guzman's doating age,
The one so stupid, and himself so sage ;
Proud with the dolt his foresight to compare
In the nice conduct of the slippery fair,—
“ Varlet, I like the cunning of thy strain,”
He said, “ and on to-morrow come again ;
“ Thy pleasant fancies former times repeat,
“ And stir in age rejuveniscent heat :
“ And, for thy very stories prove in truth
“ Thou'rt somewhat gifted with a liquorish tooth,
“ Sure as to-morrow comes, and I'm a Turk,
“ Among the slaves that in my kitchen work,
“ These very eyes shall look thee out a wife
“ Shall give thee full employment for thy life.
“ Nay, answer not—I never yet was used
“ By low-born curs and slaves to be refused.—
“ Come, girls,—away,” he said ; and as they walk'd
Still of the doating fool aloud he talk'd,

Who lost his daughter by his lack of brains,
And well deserved to lose her for his pains;
While, all unseen, Zoraida blest the wiles
Of artful Alfred with approving smiles,
Who on the bench, where late her limbs reclined,
The ring discover'd that reveal'd her mind,
And hurrying off employ'd the day and night
In secret labour to secure their flight.

Meanwhile his friends who lurk'd behind the screen,
And laughing drank the wily tale unseen,
Who each in Isabelle his lady read,
And each in Theodore himself survey'd,
Unnoted sought to enter the retreat,
And one by one explore the mossy seat.
Young Florio first with caution look'd around,
And soon, conceal'd within the moss, he found
A glittering ring, then, holding it above
He hail'd the trophy of his earliest love,

And hurried off:—While Hubert ambush'd lay
To seize with eagerness the open'd way,
Nor long explored, ere, wild with his delight,
He seized a topaz sparkling to his sight.
Next gallant Eglamour his fortune tried,—
An agate sooth'd his love, and fed his pride.
Each found a ring ; and happier than before
Each issued out confirm'd a Theodore.
In haste to find their subtle chief they ran,
Who praised their zeal, and smiling thus began:—
“ Comrades, in every hour of fortune tried,
“ By arms, by honour, and by chains allied,
“ Freedom is ours : but doubly o'er the rest,
“ One knight with love and freedom shall be blest ;
“ And, but an oath forbids me to declare
“ For whom the fates that heighten'd bliss prepare,
“ To all his name and fortune should be known,
“ And every strange adventure made your own.”
He said,—his words more doubtful than before,
But aid the wonder, and deceive the more.

An aged mariner there lived hard by,
Who in a glad and happy poverty
By daily labour gain'd his scanty fare,
Nor deem'd a thought beyond it worth his care.
A little bark defended from the rain,
Whom late it bore adventurous o'er the main,
A hovel now become, transversed it stood,
And from the jutting beach o'erpeer'd the flood ;
With various use the ribs and keel were torn,
And, like their hoary inmate, tempest-worn.
Far on the coast the frugal swain was known,
Though much recluse, and nigh a hermit grown ;
For those who wander'd from their road astray,
And fared belated by that lonely way,
At hours unseemly mark'd the taper's glare,
And heard the murmur low of Christian prayer ;
For, even yet, he could remember well
The pious rite, and toll of Sabbath bell,
The fragrant censer, and the pealing choir,
Ere, forced by war, he fled the banks of Loire.

But when the foe o'erran his fair domain,
And half his race by English swords were slain,
Push'd from the land, a corsair next he tried
Another fortune on the dangerous tide.
Bent on revenge, he roam'd the British wave,
Slew, ravaged, fired, nor mercy took nor gave ;
But, for the wrongs upon his country brought,
Still blood for blood, for plunder, plunder sought.
At length estranged from all that once was dear,
By usage deaf to pity, love, and fear,
Unmanner'd grown, and only glad in fight,
Brutal in mirth, a ruffian from a knight,
Northward no more his fury he confined,
But raised his felon arm against mankind ;
And not a keel career'd across the main,
But fled the gloomy banner of Mortaign.
Till, as it chanced, by wounds and sickness worn,
As by Cythera's isle his bark was borne,
Remorse with dreadful visitings awoke,
And to his soul returning nature spoke

Such awful things, as made him wish forgiven
His foul apostacy from man and heaven.
And, as that lovely spot his fancy pleased,
So fitted to a frame and heart diseased,
Resolved no more to villanize his race
With ruffians leagued, he chose his dwelling-place,
Where, though at first, a stranger to the beach,
They scorn'd his home uncouth and foreign speech,
His fiercer self so yielded to the clime,
To noiseless quiet, and all-healing time,
That all who knew him in his later age,
The courteous man admired, revered the sage.

Alfred, who oft had mark'd his rugged toil,
As now he snared the bird, or tamed the soil ;
Or, when his net the neighbouring deeps explored,
Had been his comrade, and partook his board,
Had heard the adventurous morning of his life,
Each deed of villanage, and deadly strife,

Feud, rapine, penitence, recounted o'er,
Till first he settled on that happy shore,
And noted well what heaviness o'ercame
The old reciter at his country's name ;
For at that sound he ever seem'd to sigh,
His speech was troubled, and bedimm'd his eye,
As one who wish'd at home to lay him down and die.

With him the knights in secret counsel plann'd
Their morrow's voyage from Cythera's land.
Well pleased he heard.—In front of his abode,
Nor far from shore, a little galleot rode,
Whose rebel crew, composed of Christian slaves,
In fetters toil'd, and plied it o'er the waves,
Saucy and loud ; and only wish'd for swords
To break those fetters, and enslave their lords.
Moor'd to a post, within a quiet bay
In Hamet's garden-ground, a shallop lay,
So fenced with myrtles from enquiring eyes,
It seem'd as form'd to aid their enterprize.

With this, well-arm'd, he purposed to subdue
The larger bark, and free the Christian crew ;
And, as their captains slept below, to shun
The giddy fervour of a mid-day sun,
In friendship's guise three comrades were assign'd
To scale the galleot, and the slaves unbind,
While, more to aid them, and prevent remark,
Himself and Alfred in his fishing bark
Agreed with peaceful looks to push from shore,
As hastening out to sell their finny store.

Thus counsell'd, all the morrow's flight prepared,
And pleased with freedom every labour shared,
And tutor'd each a diff'rent part to play,
Hail'd with an anxious joy the happy day.

END OF CANTO FIFTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SIXTH

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SIXTH.

AGAIN return'd the hopeful noontide hour,
Again the fair assembled in the bower,
Last came the reverend sire, and at his side
A nymph of Afric grinn'd in swarthy pride.
Erewhile from distant Joliba she came,
A scullion now, but once a royal dame ;
For since the foe her native realm o'erran,
And eat her sire, and sold his black divan,
Hard fate condemn'd her, tumbled from a throne,
To scour another's pans, and leave her own.

No squeamish doubts debased her generous mind,
And slander's self allow'd her to be kind ;
For soon as Alfred for her mate she knew,
Her royal arms about his neck she threw,
While thus her love the rustic knight repaid,
And sang the beauties of his sable maid.

Song to Zobbabel.

1.

“ Oh charming Zobbabel, Numidian fair !
“ More fragrant nymph than ever youth embraced,
“ Fine as the weather's fleece thy woolly hair,
“ And as a porpoise round thy goodly waste.

2.

“ Thick are the portals of thy laughing mouth,
“ In which, like tusks, thy ebon teeth are barr'd,
“ Thy breath more odorous than the balmy south
“ Disporting lightly o'er a dish of lard.

3.

“ Bright is the sable that japans thy cheek,
“ And deep the red that tips thy lovely ears ;
“ Like sucking pigs thy music, when they squeak,
“ A child in reason, and a dame in years.

4.

“ Frisky as whales that in the billows play,
“ And light as loaded asses on the plain ;
“ But oh ! by far a greater ass than they,
“ Since love has got possession of thy brain.”

He sang,—and all the while the enamour'd maid
With many an Æthiop smile his lay repaid ;
But scanty had the knight extoll'd her charms,
Ere loud and deep a voice exclaim'd, “ To arms !
“ Haste, Hamet, haste,—thy blissful ease forego,
“ Brace on thy steel, and look upon the foe !”
It rung,—and quick a stranger came in sight
With breathless speed, as newly from the fight ;

A gory fillet tied his temples round,
And faint he seem'd to stagger from a wound.
Gash'd was his helm, with blood his corslet streak'd ;
The sire was startled, and the ladies shriek'd.—
“ Those Christian dogs,” again with mournful tone
He strove to say, and heaved a heavy groan,
“ Have rear'd the Red Cross on our eastern strand,
“ And scatter'd flames and havoc o'er the land ;
“ Streams of our Turkish blood enrich the plain,
“ Alack,” he said, and doubly groan'd again,
“ 'Twould thrill thy heart their brutal deeds to tell,”
Then utter'd groan the fourth, and staggering fell :
But first a glance on Lindaraxa threw,
Who scann'd his features, and her Florio knew.
And Hamet, as he eyed the wounded man,
Mistrusting half, and half confirm'd, began :—

“ Beshrew me, friend, but that thy terror speaks
“ In both thy knocking knees and lily cheeks,

“ And thy poor wits with panic seem to quail,
“ I had thy coming deem’d an idle tale,
“ Which yester-morn was told as here I sat;
“ And now thyself and errand fall so pat,
“ That, but his life is under my controul,
“ That varlet Selim meant to play me foul.
“ Now, by my fay, I seem to smell a cheat—
“ No soldier thou, but some poor counterfeit,
“ Suborn’d perhaps, and paid to lead me wrong,
“ To lose a child, like Guzman in the song.
“ But know, weak slave, no Guzman shalt thou find,
“ So doff thine armour, and thy brows unbind,
“ Stifle thy groans, give o’er thy quaint grimace,
“ Pluck off thy beard, and shew that looby face,
“ And from this arbour if I let thee pass
“ With ribs unbroken, write me down an ass;
“ Uncase thyself, and what thou art appear—
“ Uncase,”—he said, but started back with fear;
For on his ear, with deep and lengthened swell,
The clangour of a brazen trumpet fell,

Signal of war,—and foul with dust and heat
A second stranger enter'd the retreat.
Haste in his eye and in his step was seen ;
And from his girded robe, and lowly mien,
A very messenger he seem'd to all
But Alfred's self and sprightly Nourmahal ;
E'en Nourmahal, his love, could hardly trace
Her Hubert's form in such a sorry case :
While fear with laughter held an equal strife,
To see her knight so act it to the life.

“ Great sir, for valour, though untried, renown'd,
“ Fair knighthood's cream,” he said, and kiss'd the
ground,
“ Thus sends the captain of our Turkish host ;
“ The Christian foe o'errun our eastern coast ;
“ Unfruitful war thy fainting Spahis wage,
“ Reft of thy counsels to direct their rage ;
“ For thee they call to bring their host relief,
“ And dread the fight when absent from their chief.

“Haste, Hamet, haste!”—Confirm’d by what he
heard,

The father shook his head, and stroked his beard ;

Pausing awhile to ponder in his mind,

And ask his heart which way it felt inclined.

And thus,—“Thy message summons me away,

“But something inly speaks, and bids me stay.

“The war is eastern—so ’twere clearly best

“To live securely in the quiet west.

“Sure there’s a mighty luxury in blows,

“That leads you heroes from your home’s repose

“To mix in distant broils, for empty fame,

“That make one’s very hair stand up to name,

“And rush through brains, and blood, and heaps of
dead,

“To wield a crutch, or scratch a broken head.

“Can lordly wealth such numerous ills endure ?

“No ;—mark me well, the brave are ever poor.

“Shew me a living prince or modern lord

“Who dares to look upon a foeman’s sword,

“ Or ever dream’d that polish’d steel was meant
“ For any other use than ornament.
“ Turn not to foreign lands, but take our own,
“ Behold the guardian of our Turkish throne,
“ The Sultan’s second child, but first in grace,
“ That martial imp the Hospodar of Thrace,
“ Who, when our foes against the realm combined,
“ The refuse, filth, and sweepings of mankind,
“ Thrice led his whisker’d host in long array,
“ And three times ran most royally away ;
“ And hence our chiefs by method train’d to flight,
“ (For sure a prince’s model must be right,)
“ Prepared to run or ere the foe they meet,
“ Secure their honour by a bought retreat.
“ Go—seek the tumult, and my Spahis tell,
“ That from my very soul I wish them well;
“ Bid them do all that men can do, or more
“ T’ avert the danger from this happy shore ;
“ But in their captain say, ’twere mean to claim
“ One single laurel from their wreath of fame.

“ How far more pleasant in these tranquil shades
“ The parent’s task, to guard his fav’rite maids,
“ To list yon varlet chaunt his idle lays,
“ Or hear, or tell the tales of former days,
“ Than all the scars that valiant men adore,
“ Of seven wide wounds—and all received before.
“ Hence from my sight, ye clods of vilest clay!”—
(They went, and to the vessel bent their way)—
“ In very truth, their errand makes me quail,
“ My manhood falters, and my fears prevail,
“ Which to divert myself will tell a tale :—
“ Once on a time,” he hemm’d, and thus began,
“ Bless’d with a large increase, there lived a man :
“ This happy man, alack !”—He hardly spoke,
Ere on the tale a third intruder broke ;
Fierce was his eye, and dire his bushy brow,
One hand a sabre grasp’d, and one a bow ;
Scowling he strode, and wore upon his face
His borrow’d beard with such a ruffian grace,

That Murder's self (if such a power there be)
Had proudly own'd, this man is kin to me.
E'en Almahide herself, affrighted sore,
Could hardly trace her sweet Sir Eglamour ;
Who, while his eyes with savage fury roll'd,
First bent his bow, and then his errand told.

“ Cythera's chief,” with thundering voice he said,
“ Demands thy presence, traitor, or thy head.
“ Thou laggard captain, vile and caitiff knight,
“ Storehouse of panic thou, and base affright,
“ Here found with women in an hour of need,
“ While of their captain reft thy Spahis bleed,
“ Wretch, or despair thy forfeit head to save,
“ Or strive, in spite of nature, to be brave !”—
He said, and Hamet answered in a trice,
(His hair rose upward, and his blood was ice,)—
“ 'Twere much unkind to baulk a chief's request,
“ In such a courteous phrase of language dress'd ;

“ Me or my head he asks,—and since the choice

“ He kindly tenders to the wearer’s voice,

“ Marry, ’twere well to keep that self-same head,

“ Though little worth, and go myself instead.

“ Go, gentle ruffian, and acquaint thy lord,

“ This day shall prove the temper of my sword.

“ I haste, I fly to be in arms enroll’d,—

“ To save a head would make a woman bold.

“ And, while around death-doing blows I deal,

“ Or rise to fame by fleetness of my heel,

“ This duty, Selim, I consign to thee,

“ To keep my daughters under lock and key.”

He spoke,—but grief sat heavy in his face,

While yet he held them in his last embrace ;

And as he went, like one to peace inclined,

He turn’d and cast a longing look behind.

The comrade knights were posted at the bay,

Expectant each to take his fair away ;

And as the heart of either beat with fear
To see his lady through the copse appear,
Each found a cause to make his fellow wait,
And each with willing faith devour'd the bait;
Till Florio thus,—“ Some charm deludes my eye,
“ Or else through yonder glade I view a spy;
“ Look, Eglamour.”—“ Alas!” return'd the knight,
“ Too true thy dread, too faithful is thy sight,
“ 'Tis Nourmahal,—and nearer yet she seems
“ To watch our motions, and dissolve our dreams.”
Then each, who only thought to meet his own,
Cried, “ Haste to sea ! we're captured and undone ;
“ By yonder cruel fair we die betray'd !”—
“ Not so,” said Hubert, and embraced the maid ;
“ But since our chief's intentions are reveal'd,
“ Long time by oaths and knightly vows conceal'd,
“ That all with liberty, and one above
“ His happy fellows should be blest with love,
“ (Which joyous lot, to none but Alfred known,
“ By secret hints, was meant for me alone.)

- “ Since now no further cause demands our stay,
“ Haste to the pinnace, and no more delay ;
“ But lest suspicion should awake on shore,
“ Let each with courage ply his lusty oar.
“ You halt—But why my fair, so deadly pale,
“ What sad alarms thy gentle heart assail ?
“ Look up, my Nourmahal, my idol, saint!—
“ Ah, renegades ! to see a lady faint,
“ And would not in so fair a cause endure
“ Stripes, fetters, racks, and dungeons for her cure !
“ But stay, since terror can your hearts enthrall,
“ Myself will be the captain, crew, and all.”

Thus while he said, and raised her in his arms,
With tearful eyes, and trembling with alarms,—
“ Ah me ! Sir knight,” she murmured with a sigh,
“ Be gone in haste, and leave me here to die ;
“ A jealous sister in yon leafy screen
“ Observes whate’er we say or do unseen ;

“ Envious that fortune should for me prepare

“ Those sweets that never can be her’s to share.

“ I mark’d her well,—and soon must I abide

“ The bitter spite of traitress Almahide.

“ Ah me!” with piteous tone she sigh’d again,

But courteous Eglamour repress’d her pain.

“ And if thy fears,” he said, with brightening eyes,

“ Alone from envious Almahide arise,

“ Myself perchance a remedy might find

“ Of power to quell the terror of thy mind.”

He said,—and quickly issuing from the shade,

Propp’d on his bosom, led the willing maid.

Fearful she came, and scarce believed her sight,

But gazing firmly on the Rhodian knight,—

“ Sure ’tis a spell,” she said, with wilder’d look,

“ Conjured by words from some enchanted book,

“ Or this my sister Nourmahal should be—

“ Or some vain shew, and idle mockery!

“ And yet she breathes, and blushes too so warm,

“ And hangs so fondly on her galliard’s arm,

“ That I should deem the vision which I view

“ At least as lively as myself or you.”

Each knight embraced his fair, and stood to gaze

Each on the other's lady with amaze ;

So charm'd, that neither could believe but half,

Inclined to wonder now, and now to laugh.

“ But wherefore stand we idling here on shore ?

“ Away to sea !” cried merry Eglamour ;

“ A comrade's fortune makes my bosom glad,

“ But wherefore looks our Florio's brow so sad ?

“ Otranto's walls, renown'd for beauty's pride ;

“ Has choice enough to furnish him a bride ;

“ But if he envies us our happy state,

“ Nor wills to leave this isle without a mate,

“ What else remains but Zobbabel to woo,

“ A maid with graces large enough for two ?

“ So very charming, that but half her charms

“ Would amply burthen four encircling arms ;

“ Whose years would furnish, if divided clean,
“ Three proper nymphs, and every nymph sixteen ;
“ Fair as japan, and kinder far than fair,
“ Who never drove a suitor to despair.
“ I tell thee, man, if love can soothe thy pain,
“ Reveal it straight, and sigh no more in vain.”

Bant'ring he spoke,—but Florio inly grieved,
Mock'd by a friend, and by a maid deceived,
“ O faithless, fickle, foolish womankind !”—
He sigh'd, and mutter'd in his silent mind,—
“ These knights, who never till this morning loved,
“ Smit with a random passion are approved ;
“ While I, who long have pass'd my nights in sighs,
“ By day exchanged sweet intercourse of eyes,
“ Who from the bower, where yesternoon she lay,
“ Bore this glad token of our flight to-day,
“ Must bid Cythera's fragrant shore adieu,
“ The only mourner in our happy crew.”

And longer had he mused,—but Almahide
Trembling beheld, and thus began to chide :—

“ Fortune is ours ; why haste we not from land,
“ And thus accept the favour from her hand ?
“ For know, fond knights, if longer ye delay,
“ Your lives will answer, and the forfeit pay ;
“ E'en now, as hither from the bower I stepp'd,
“ Behind me watchful Lindaraxa crept,
“ Pry'd through the leaves, and often look'd around,
“ And trod, as if afraid to touch the ground.
“ Nor far from hence, with myrtles hid, she lies,
“ And, bent on mischief, every motion spies.”

“ False tongue, to name thee faithless !” Florio cried,
And through the covert sprang to meet his bride,
Whom, as he led to join the happy crew,
Such potent wonder held them at the view,
That all stood rooted, giddy and confused,
And, as their senses were by charms abused,

Their feeling doubted, disbelieved their eyes,
That seem'd to gaze on airy drolleries.
And thus they thought, if visions can deceive,
Thus may we yet be cheated, yet believe.
Till reconciled to sense, and blythe of mood,
They push'd from land, and skimm'd along the flood.
But now the brides, who hardly e'er before
Had view'd the heaving waters, but from shore,
Perchance were frighten'd o'er the sea to roam,
Or sigh'd at parting from their father's home ;
While each some comfort for her terror sought,
And thus, to cure her sadness, said or thought:—

“ Ungracious daughters, from our sire to fly
“ With hateful Christians to a foreign sky,
“ Thus to repay his too indulgent care,
“ And give our vows of filial love to air ;
“ How far more bless'd, and by the good admired,
“ Here had we lived from eye of man retired,

- “ Forever pacing through these happy shades,
“ Forever duteous, and forever maids !
“ And yet one child to tend his age is left,
“ Thus in a trice of time of three bereft,
“ Who still remains respectfully unwed,
“ To read, to saunter, and to rub his head ;
“ One duteous child, and could he wish for more,
“ His head perchance had ached if rubb’d by four.
“ Zoraida yet her filial love maintains,
“ And for her father spurns the nuptial chains ;
“ Fair as the fairest, cold as ice unsunn’d,
“ Whose heart has every warm enticement shunn’d,
“ She still remains her parent to obey,
“ To do the self-same things the self-same way ;
“ Chaunt the same tunes her old applause to meet,
“ Till every bird can every note repeat ;
“ Read the same plotless tales by wits design’d
“ To prune each vagrant wildness of the mind,—
“ Of knights correct, who act by rule and line,
“ And maids, who maidens are to forty-nine ;

“ In the same garden every day to range,
“ Now early and now late, by way of change ;
“ While we must cross the frightful seas, and dare
“ To league with husbands in a foreign air ;
“ Remembering oft those joys but lately known,
“ Reserved, Zoraida, now in thee alone.”

Thus while they mused, the lusty rowers gain'd
The appointed galleot, and the crew enchain'd,
Who, by Mortaign suborn'd the day before,
Had mark'd the pinnace when it left the shore,
And sat prepared their masters to invade,
And with mute signals hail'd the coming aid.
One chief, who paced the vessel to and fro,
With courteous phrase admits the hidden foe,
Salutes each knight, to every lady tends
His helping arm, as each the bark ascends.
And while to all a welcome he express'd,
And duty paid to every lovely guest,

Excusing often with a seaman's air,
In rude but kindly speech, their naval fare,
And offering all a cabin could afford,
A friendly greeting and a simple board ;
E'en in his very utterance, he found
The hands, whose action graced it, tightly bound ;
The loosen'd crew at once unsheath their swords,
And those who plied the oar become the lords.

END OF CANTO SIXTH

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SEVENTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO SEVENTH.

BUT Fortune, friendly to the adventurous band
Forsook the lovers who remain'd on land,
Seaward in vain they view the pennon fly,
Or list the shout in mark of victory ;
And, shrouded by the woody glooms, in vain
The friendly cabin seek of old Mortaign.
Full oft Zoraida breathless look'd behind,
Scared at the wood-leaves rustling in the wind,
And as the footfall of each beast that fled,
And every wandering plume increased her dread,

Paler and paler yet she grew, and press'd
More close and closer yet to Alfred's breast ;
While he so fondly held her in his arms,
So tenderly repress'd her heart's alarms,
And all so aptly whisper'd to her fear
Words of gay hope by turns, and chidings dear,
That feverish terror, robb'd of its alloy
By such a loved consoler, seem'd as joy.

Thus hand in hand they track'd the leafy road,
And well-nigh gain'd the pilot's lone abode,
When from the shades a doubtful sound arose,—
“ Ah list,” Zoraida cried, “ the voice of foes !”
Again they stopp'd, and in the covert pried,—
“ 'Twas but the passing breeze that faintly sigh'd ;
“ Ah tremble not, my fair !” the knight pursued,
“ Spotless art thou, and heaven protects the good.
“ Shame on thy terror, and that idle tear !
“ What ill can harm thee with thine Alfred near ?

“ Near thee my arm is nerved with double might,
“ And my firm soul takes courage from thy sight.”
He spoke,—but hardly had her fear allay’d,
When distant footfalls rustled through the shade.
“ Hark, ’tis the tread of men within the wood!”—
They paused, and breathless with attention stood;
Again the lover soothed her bosom’s dread—
“ Believe me, love, we list no human tread;
“ ’Tis but the tricky marmoset that strays,
“ And shells his nuts, and mid the foliage plays;
“ On yonder citron top he makes his seat,
“ And gambols there with many an antic feat.
“ Anon he flies—on flowering almonds now,
“ Mocking our course, he hops from bough to bough;
“ Look up, my fair—our comrades wait at sea—
“ The favouring breezes bid us to be free,
“ And blest in love and liberty rejoice!”—
“ False slave, thou liest!” returned a stranger voice,
Pale grew the knight, and starting with surprise,
To find the speaker turn’d his piercing eyes.

“ And who art thou, base peasant wretch, reply,
“ That Alfred know’st, and dares to give the lye ?
“ Art silent ?—Cheerly, love ; for not a breath
“ Stirs the dark boughs, but all is still as death.
“ Fool that I was, to fear an idle sound,
“ And start at words, as if a word could wound !
“ To us that rude response no ill portends ;
“ For all within this quiet gloom are friends.
“ Haply some woodman in such phrase uncouth
“ Provoked to brisker toil his labouring youth ;—
“ Mistrust it not ;—or thus in fitful hate
“ Perchance some fowler chid his laggard mate.”

But now confused they hear a distant sound
Of mingled voices from the wilds around ;
Nearer and nearer yet it fill’d the shade,
While Alfred closer strain’d the trembling maid,
And, ’gainst his better reason, strove again
With feign’d excuses to allay her pain :—

“ Sweet soul, to us yon echoes bode no harm—
“ No more they sound—repress thy vain alarm—
“ Perchance some village children here resort,
“ And in the grove around pursue their sport.
“ They call not us,—and if they make reply,
“ ’Tis but, as children use, in mockery.
“ Ah smile, Zoraida—smile for pity’s sake !
“ ’Tis but, in sooth, some rustic merry-make.
“ Heavens, thou art pale !—thy toil shall quickly end,
“ Yon cabin gives thee shelter and a friend :
“ Look, love, a bowshot off it hardly stands,—
“ Back’d by the thicket,—and the sea commands.
“ Oh shame ! to dread when safety lies so near ;
“ For what can now enthral us, but to fear ?”—
“ To steal a daughter !”—said a voice unknown,
That thrill’d their senses, numb’d their limbs to stone.
And as on every part they threw their eyes,
A portly form they saw of bloated size ;
Half hid in bushes, half exposed to sight,—
With scorn the lurking stranger scann’d the knight.

His scorn the knight with double scorn repaid,
And dared his pamper'd foe to leave the shade—
'Twas Zulemah, who long with proffer'd land
And heaps of gold had sought Zoraida's hand ;
Proud of his titles and his wide domain,
And even of his rayless ignorance vain,
He neither woo'd with words nor graceful art,
But thought with sovereign wealth to buy her heart ;
And if with wealth affection could be bought,
He had not miss'd the treasure that he sought.

 This child of fortune, as he daily stray'd
For ease and freshness in that cooling shade,
Had oft an eye on hastening Alfred cast,
As to the cabin of Mortaign he past ;
Till wondering why he came so oft alone,
And now from usage half familiar grown,
He deign'd at times with trifles to delay
The seeming gardener on his custom'd way,—

As, “ what his own, and what his master’s name,
“ On what, and whither bent, and whence he came ?”
To which the knight, oft question’d, would relate
Whate’er might best become his lowly state,
With such a rustic air and language rude,
By second nature tutor’d to delude,
That not a trace or feature could be seen
Of former Alfred in his alter’d mien,
That hateful servant, who, in roguery bold,
But lately robb’d him of his love and gold.

Sometimes with wallet o’er his shoulder flung
Wandering he went, and as he wander’d sung,
To mark where most the wholesome olive grew,
Or where the orange shew’d a richer hue ;
Or war against the woodland fowl to wage,
Or snare the squirrel for my lady’s cage ;
Sometimes he bore a basket in his hand
For sea-fish hastening at my lord’s command,

Or mid the reefs to search some favourite spot
For shells or coral for my lady's grot.
With these or some pretence he garnish'd o'er
His daily journey to and from the shore,
And thus the watchful Zulemah deceived,
Who still the more deluded, more believed.

 This wealthy suitor chanced to lose at sea
Two vessels fraught with eastern luxury,
With amber, essence, gold, and spices rare,
And Georgian maids, as houris bright and fair,
And raiment soft to view and gay to sight,
And drags to spur a jaded appetite ;
This prize was captured by a Christian band
When the glad master hail'd it from the land.
But Fortune, who forever loves to grace
The fat and worthless with her highest place,
Sore vex'd to hurt her fond and favourite heir,
To heal the harm, for Alfred laid a snare.

For so the loss the loser's mind engaged,
That ever since at noble arms he raged,
Abroad, at table, in his hours of rest,
Still on his thoughts the plunder'd treasure press'd,
In every place alike, where'er he went,
His rage forever struggled for a vent;
Which so o'erlook'd all difference of degree,
That e'en with low-born slaves and Alfred free
He curs'd the flower of Christian chivalry.
And with such emphasis of hate decried
Their deeds of enterprize and martial pride,
That Alfred's noble nature, forced so long
By hard necessity to suffer wrong,
Beam'd forth, long smother'd, in his glowing eyes,
And spurn'd at once the caution of disguise:
His blood indignant mantled in his cheek,
His tongue in boorish phrase forgot to speak,
And in defence of knighthood's fair renown
His mien so changed, and so forsook the clown,

As made e'en stupid Zulemah admire
A 'haviour foreign from a slave's attire.

With wonder half confounded, half with fear,
Amazed to see the change, amazed to hear;
The listener scann'd his figure and his face,
His utterance noted next, and new-born grace,
From whence he saw, but disbelieved his sight,
Form, voice, and gesture of the thievish knight.
But nought remarking, wisely hid his mind,
And ever after watched the seeming hind.
No more he met him every coming day,
But lurk'd unseen, and eyed him on his way,
Beset, whate'er his path, with secret spies,
And grafted every tree with ears and eyes.

His absence Alfred mark'd, and as he walk'd,
Thus haply to his jovial comrades talk'd :—
“ 'Tis well that Zulemah, that son of trade,
“ Ceases to wander in his favourite shade,

“ His presence haply had our passage barr’d,
“ But sickness now has put him off his guard ;
“ Here oft he used to meet me till of late ;
“ But grown at length to such unwieldly weight,
“ He finds it hard to reach his old retreat.
“ But, by the Virgin, should we chance to meet,
“ The pamper’d dolt will lay his silly head
“ On something harder than a downy bed.”

And each might call his brother knight by name,
As homeward hastening through the copse they came ;
All which the prying Zulemah, who stood
Safe lodged in covert of the friendly wood,
Had noted well, and now appear’d in sight,
To brave the hidden foe, and mar his flight.—
“ Stop, villain, renegade, my bride restore !
“ I know thee well,” he said, “ deceived before.
“ Now by Lanfusa’s head, and Mahmet’s beard,
“ Thee and thy fellows, Alfred, I o’erheard ;

“ I heard them triumph in to-day’s escape,
“ And thee a Christian call, and me an ape ;
“ Thee most I heard invoke some demon’s name,
“ Whose fearful mention thrills my very frame,
“ And threat, that if to-day thy path I barr’d,
“ This goodly head forsooth should lie but hard.
“ But here, weak slave, behold I bar thy flight,
“ Arrest my bride, and dare thee to the fight !”
The lovers heard, nor laughter could forego,
To see so fat a suitor and a foe ;
But Alfred’s mirth by hatred was allay’d,
And thus in vain he dared him from the shade :—

“ Thou graceless lump of earth, thou nature’s flaw,
“ Thou idiot child of traffic—haste and draw !
“ But say, what opiate fume, what drug of bane,
“ What strong provocative to mad the brain,
“ Has brought thee fatted thus, and thus array’d
“ In gaudy trappings, jewels, and brocade,

- “ To look on danger, fond and vulgar knave,
“ And change thy citron couches for a grave?
“ Go, seek the banquet—there resume thy seat—
“ Contented there by turns to sleep and eat;
“ Or, if thine appetite a pause afford,
“ Number thy coffers and their golden hoard.
“ But know, vile earth, though riches here have
 weight,
“ To wrest the law, and make the foolish great,
“ All-generous love o’erlooks the vain degree,
“ That gave distinction to a worm like thee.
“ Some dame as bloated as thyself pursue,
“ And chest with chest, with title title woo;
“ Or if that best defence thy cunning flies,
“ By which dull fools so lord it o’er the wise,
“ If suken pomp, and banquetting, and gold
“ Cloy on thy sense, and surfeit make thee bold,
“ Why keep thy distance in that close retreat?
“ Come forth, brave sot, and scorn to be discreet.”

“ Dream not, poor knight, I come to bandy words,”
The rival cried, “ with slaves who rob their lords,
“ Nor thou by rage a hastier death provoke,
“ Already forfeit to the headsman’s stroke,
“ See me unarm’d, and tremble to behold,
“ My sword is titles, and my shield is gold;
“ Secured by these I dare thee to the field,
“ But first, confirm’d in triumph, bid thee yield.—
“ Haste to my aid from every leafy screen,
“ Guardians of sainted riches, and be seen.”

Straight with the word appear’d the satrap’s guard,
A numerous troop, and every passage barr’d;
And in their rear, O sad and dreadful sight!
Dragg’d into view the hoary Norman knight;
His limbs with galling fetters were o’erpower’d,
Yet his dark brow on all so fiercely lowr’d,
That none could bear the terror of that eye,
Though dimm’d with age and stern captivity.

Then first, in all its bitterness, despair
On Alfred broke—distemper'd was his air ;
And now his eyes in sudden wildness bend
Their vacant lustre on his fetter'd friend ;
And now his arms around the fair he threw,
And strove, but could not, bid a last adieu ;
Till, at the voice that bade the archers wrest
The lovely mourner from his aching breast,
“ Farewell !” she murmur'd, “ though condemn'd to
part,

“ Thy image treasured in my faithful heart
“ Shall ever reign : whate'er my sire's decree,
“ My soul unalter'd loves but only thee.
“ Thee to my lonely chamber will it bear ;
“ Thee in my thralldom and in fetters wear ;
“ Thee to the latest ebb of mortal breath ;
“ Thee to whate'er awaits it after death,
“ It bears united by a heart-worn chain
“ To share its every joy, and lighten every pain.”

She said,—but conquer'd by her sense of woe,
Paler and colder than the mountain snow,
Fell on her Alfred's arm;—the guards divide
The fetter'd lover from his fainting bride;
And with Mortaign the noble youth immure
In a dark vault with iron bars secure.
Yet though imprison'd in his narrow cell,
His thoughts on lost Zoraida turn'd to dwell;
Upon the mystic ring he fix'd his eyes,
And felt a new and soothing calm arise;
And raising it to kiss,—“ Dear ring,” he said,
“ Thou sweet and sad remembrance of the maid,
“ Graced by her hair, and on her finger worn,
“ Well hast thou paid me for contempt and scorn,
“ For labour, sickness, and enthraldom past,
“ And all the clouds that yet my sky o'ercast.
“ E'en now, the master of this glorious spoil,
“ Ease in my chains I feel, repose in toil,
“ And still shall own, when here I fix my sight,
“ In thirst refreshment, and in dungeons light.”

Meanwhile the sober sire, whose youthful life
Had pass'd in quiet ease, apart from strife,
Who ne'er had marshall'd squadron, but for shew,
Nor dream'd, good man, to lead against a foe,
Roused in his later age by false alarms
To leave his home and handle dangerous arms,
To seek for Christians at an idle call,
And find no Christians to contend withall;
Half pleased to breathe again from his dismay,
And humbled half to be decoy'd away,
Sought the calm home that late he bade adieu,
And found his pleasures like his fears untrue;
Abroad no cruel Christian foe to face,
At home no pious daughters to embrace,—
Or only one, who openly profess'd
To love the robber of her father's rest.
Where should he turn?—In horror and despair
He smote his wither'd breast, and tore his hair,
In haste dispatch'd his troopers to explore
The woods, the huts, the champaign, and the shore;

Nor land alone,—but galley's scour the main,
With proffer'd pardon, liberty, and gain.
To every slave who should restore a child
To share a father's blessing, undefiled.

The venturous comrades in their bark with grief
Watch the lined shore, and shudder for their chief;
But when they mark the galleots put to sea,
And all the bay beset with scrutiny,
By timely flight they soothe the trembling fair,
Ply their stout oars and issue from the snare.
And short their labour, ere the happy band
Greet the blue heights of gay Italia's land,
Where every fair, instructed by her lord,
Bow'd to the Virgin's image, and adored;
And by the holy rite to rapture moved,
Confess'd it truth, and truth from lips beloved.
Otranto's lords the triple nuptials hail,
And all their ladies learn'd to tell the tale.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO EIGHTH.



THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO EIGHTH.

BUT gloomy grief the father's mind oppress'd,
Nor day nor night permitted him to rest,
His willing maids conspiring to the loss,
And, worse than all, adorers of the cross,
Prey'd on his heart; but from experience gain'd
He strove to save the child that yet remain'd.
Her damsels were discharged, whose equal age
Might make them in Zoraida's cause engage,

And in their stead he studied to obtain
Some prudent matron in her age's wane,
Whose watchful eye might ever be prepared
To keep his only daughter under ward.

To crown his search, it chanc'd him to behold
Upon the stand where slaves are bought and sold,
Among the vulgar and ignobler kind
One hapless lady suited to his mind,
Above the weeping crew conspicuous seen
For her high portance, and majestic mien,
Who, when the rest bemoan'd their fate with cries,
Smother'd her grief, and stood with tearless eyes,
While now and then a hectic flush'd her face,
That o'er her lowly fortune threw a grace.
Gone was her summer rose, by grief consumed,
But yet remain'd, to point where once it bloom'd,
Some remnant by the vengeful spoiler left,
Who robb'd, as if repentant of the theft ;

A charm that witness'd even in decay
Matilda's beauty in her better day.

She seem'd descended from a noble line ;
Her age, her air well fitted his design,
From error to recall his favourite fair,
To watch her ever with a guardian care,
To fix her love in favour of the lord
Whom more than death her loyal soul abhorr'd,
And though she held her captive and confined,
With pleasing commune to divert her mind.
The slave was bought, and soon Zoraida loved
The noble matron by her sire approved ;
Mistress and slave were terms of empty sound,
Forgotten soon, and soon in friendship drown'd,
Or, turn'd to names of parent and of child,
With happy terms their bitter lot beguill'd.

Meanwhile the raging Zulemah aspires
By every art to compass his desires ;

Bent on revenge, and since the maid of late
Had scorn'd his love, to pay her scorn with hate.
He feign'd a passion purer than before,
As if despair enslaved his heart the more ;
Her blinder choice he pitied, and forgave
That sought for union with a lowly slave ;
And as deceit inform'd his stubborn sense
With grace of words, and new-born eloquence,
Terms of sweet import seem'd at ease to flow,—
“ His charming traitress,” and “ his lovely foe.”
And thus by counterfeited anguish still
He gain'd the listening father to his will,
On the next morn to fix the spousal day,
And force his wretched daughter to obey ;
Resolved to triumph o'er the scorner's pride,
And make her mourner with the name of bride.
And more to sweeten yet the fatal hour,
To glut his vengeance, and assert his power,
E'en on the bridal morning he decreed
That Alfred and the Norman knight should bleed :

Thus should he revel as the blest above,
Crown'd with o'ermastering vengeance and with love.

Now came that eve before the fatal morn,
And tidings to the captive pair were borne,
In their dark cell, that on the coming day
Each with his life should for his treason pay ;
And that same hour when noble Alfred died
Should make his lovely maid a rival's bride.

This heard, the youth in silence paused a while,
Then to the herald turning with a smile
Mournful and stedfast, summon'd all the man
To nerve his soul within, and thus began :—
“ I thank thee, herald ; doubly blest to know
“ So fair a lady, and so kind a foe.
“ Great thanks I owe to my auspicious fate,
“ Prosper'd by love, befriended now by hate :
“ For had I lived, to call Zoraida wife
“ Alone had made a worthy gift of life ;

‘ And since my hated rival rich to see
“ In that loved treasure newly robb’d from me
“ Had wrung my heart to madness from despair,
“ That hateful foe, as if he meant to spare,
“ With friendly malice sentenced me to die,
“ To rid me of a cureless agony,
“ On that black hour that gives Zoraida’s charms
“ To loathed endearments in the spoiler’s arms ;
“ This to have witness’d, to have seen the bride
“ Borne off in triumph at my rival’s side,
“ Prank’d like an empress in a gorgeous stole,
“ With all of gladness, but her hidden soul,
“ And to the beat of cymbals led in state,
“ To weep the brutality of her stupid mate,
“ Had been a dear revenge, a poisonous draught
“ More dire than ever was by step-son quaff’d ;
“ That had condemn’d me by a slow decay,
“ And led to death through horror and dismay :
“ Go, thank thy lord who burns to set me free,
“ In love a tyrant, kind in cruelty.”

He said,—and when the messenger of fate
Departing closed again the iron grate,
On old Mortaign a sad regard he threw,
And from his eyelids wiped the mournful dew,
And thus bespoke :—“ Yes, happy should I brave,
“ Borne up by love, the terror of the grave,
“ Content to die, since Fortune wills, alone ;
“ But what to thee, brave Norman, shall atone
“ For those vile fetters, for this dreary vault,
“ For death, the guerdon of thy comrade’s fault ?
“ I fondly thought that happiness was nigh,
“ That soon restored to breathe thy native sky,
“ Worn as thou art with years, and life’s unrest,
“ Thy age at length with honour should be blest,
“ Where silver Loire flows by thy native walls,
“ Still great and glorious in thy father’s halls.”

Dark lower’d the raven brow of old Mortaign,
And all his face was flush’d with high disdain,

Upon his chains he look'd with gloomy pride,
And thus, with folded arms, severe replied :—

“ Art thou my friend ?—In what forgotten page
“ Of my past life, from boyhood down to age,
“ Hast ever read, in tempest or in fight,
“ That death had power to scare me with his sight ?
“ In my green youth, when pleasure's pulse beat high,
“ When life was sweet, I never fear'd to die ;
“ And what has age, the dregs of life, to give
“ So heavenly prized, that I should pray to live ?
“ When on the shores of England once I spread
“ Devouring flames, and fed them with the dead,
“ Since for myself life hardly was a care,
“ My rage unpitying never paused to spare,
“ But still tumultuous fell alike on all,
“ Nor heeded when myself was doom'd to fall ;
“ And shall I now my cheeks with sorrow steep,
“ And in these years at death's approaches weep,

“ As at a spectre like an infant start—
“ And in the voice that bids me to depart
“ Blame Nature, stepping from her laws astray,
“ When from the world she summon’d me away?

“ Oh avarice of life ! Oh mean desire
“ To keep alive a half-extinguish’d fire,
“ Numbering the seasons gone like treasured ore,
“ And hoping future to increase the store !
“ That with its increase brings us for our gain
“ Hours of regretted joy, and years of pain.
“ For this will coward chieftains shun the grave
“ On tented field, or on the battle-wave ;
“ Before the city’s trench resign their trust,
“ And trail their country’s ensigns in the dust.
“ For this the wretch with pining sickness pale
“ Seeks the warm upland, or soft-bosom’d vale.
“ There lingering, hopeless to disarm its power,
“ And grudging yet to spare one little hour,

“Stretch’d on his bed, through pangs, regrets and fears
“Clings to the growing weight of added years.”

Thus communing, the captives wore away
The gloomy hours before that fearful day,
Expectant of their death; nor less forlorn
Zoraida trembled for the coming morn.
For though she knew not that her suitor’s hate
Had doomed her Alfred to a cruel fate,
Her mind prophetic fear’d from what it knew
The worst that hatred and revenge could do.
But e’en the worst extreme of cruelty
Could but condemn a sufferer once to die,
While she was sentenced to prolong her breath,
Painfully dying by a lingering death,
Cursed with a hateful partner of her bed,
And doomed in living to be worse than dead.

Such the stern law, and such the dire controul
That chains soft woman, and subjects her soul

To man's hard empire in the Paynim land,
And yields the scourge and sceptre to his hand ;
That tutors him to rule with cruel sway,
And bows the lovely vassal to obey,
To soothe his humour, study his delight,
And ever serve a wayward appetite.
And when with years decays the grosser flame,
With naught of love acquainted but the name,
The joyless pair move downward to the grave
A lordly savage and a weeping slave.

Ah wretched race ! by you shall ne'er be known
That holy flame the good are proud to own ;
Boast as ye will, the loveliness ye prize,
The sylphid form, and languishment of eyes ;
Be charm'd, and changeful to another roam,
But never know a spot to call your home ;
Nor in your fleeting raptures e'er pretend
In one blest choice to know a bride and friend.

Friendship is love, but love with pinions shorn,
That takes delight to dwell where it was born,
And when by holy intercourse refined
It rules the heart, as once it ruled the mind,
There highly scepter'd shall it ever rest,
And make that heart with its dominion blest.

Now darkness fell, but at the darksome hour
The sad Zoraida watch'd within her bower,
And with her friendly slave through all the night
Sat, and discoursed on fortune's fell despite;
But ever as she faulter'd Alfred's name
A suddeu tremor o'er Matilda came,
A deadly paleness, and a thrilling fear,
As if that name were to her bosom near.
That gentle hearts should for the gentle grieve,
And share their pain 'twere easy to believe;
But the deep sighs that from Matilda broke,
A more than common sympathy bespoke.

The hidden cause she press'd her to reveal,
Nor aught in her eventful life conceal
That to her hapless lover might relate,
And fill'd her heart with anguish for his fate.

END OF CANTO EIGHTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO NINTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO NINTH.

Matilda's Story.

“BLEST was my fate, in youth a happy bride,
“To all of good, to all of great allied,
“And, but for war and baleful thirst for fame
“That ruled my lord, I yet had known the name,
“Nor left him slumbering in a distant grave,
“Nor, galled by sad reverses, pined a slave.

“But heaven, that calls us from the world away,
“Wills that our joys should last but for a day;

“ And lest on things below we fix our eyes,
“ Charm’d with existence, and forget the skies,
“ Freedom from ill is happiness at best,
“ And e’en the very summit is but rest.
“ For not in youth we pluck a thornless rose,
“ And all our after way is dark with woes,
“ A bosom husband, parent, child, and friend,
“ Before our summons to the grave descend,
“ That, sadly robb’d on every coming year
“ Of something loved, that chain’d our wishes here,
“ Life-weary grown, we loath our dark sojourn,
“ And wish to follow whence is no return.

“ In happy ease, high-honour’d and renown’d,
“ At England’s court we saw a year go round ;
“ A languid frame, a calm reflective mind,
“ A heart to gentle offices inclined,
“ To peaceful studies turn’d my chosen lord
“ From deeds of carnage that his soul abhorr’d ;

“ On arts, that sorted with his nature, bent,
“ No more he sought the gorgeous tournament,
“ But left the shout of victory and fame
“ To sterner souls, and limbs of sturdier frame.
“ Well pleased I mark’d him bent on letter’d lore,
“ And Nature’s book with piercing ken explore ;
“ The moon’s cold waning ; from what hidden source
“ The fountains flow eternal in their course ;
“ The baleful lights that shoot athwart the skies,
“ And stars of health that night and morning rise :
“ These, and the varied use of fruit or flower,
“ And minerals of dark or saving power,
“ He strove to search ; and as through Nature’s laws
“ He traced some wonder to its primal cause,
“ Rapt in the bold pursuit, his soaring mind
“ Touch’d at heaven-gate, and left the world behind.

“ But next with ardent scrutiny he ran
“ From Nature’s wonders to the works of man ;

“ For books, and travell’d men, who held resort
“ From every quarter at the English court,
“ Such wonders told achieved by human hands,
“ As made him burn to visit foreign lands.

“ Myself was of his train—o’erjoy’d we went,
“ And honour’d high, o’er Europe’s continent,
“ Felt the warm sun a livelier sense bestow,
“ And saw creation gladden’d by the glow.
“ Art own’d her empire in a better sky
“ With nobler piles of antique masonry,
“ Whate’er the painter or the sculptor wrought
“ Breathed as inspired by some diviner thought,
“ E’en language caught a tincture from the clime,
“ And flow’d in sounds melodious and sublime.
“ Then eastward bent, from Arno’s myrtled side
“ To where the Danube rolls his foaming tide,
“ We journeyed to those high imperial towers,
“ Where reigns the Cæsar o’er a hundred powers.

“ There was our love with one sweet daughter blest,
“ A fairer ne’er was strain’d to mother’s breast ;
“ How bleeds my heart when memory turns to trace
“ A husband’s features in her infant face !
“ How fondly turns that bleeding heart to thee,
“ As thou wert like her in thine infancy !
“ Back, bitter drops.—A year in this sojourn
“ Had cheerly pass’d, when, bent on our return,
“ At the high shrine of Sophia’s airy dome
“ We pray’d for friendly gales to waft us home.

“ Kind were the gales;—a good and courteous band
“ Of strangers drawn from every distant land
“ In that imperial city to reside
“ Became our comrades homeward on the tide ;
“ And as our course with favouring breeze we bent
“ Between the shores of either continent,
“ Or hail’d the green isles opening to our view,
“ Or mark’d them fading, and discovered new,

“ Or distant domes, and marble colonnades,
“ That once to Grecian sages lent their shades,
“ The travell’d strangers with the varying scene
“ Recall’d what once each happy spot had been,
“ Retraced the monuments of ancient times
“ To virtues consecrate, or human crimes.

“ Thus with glad hearts the dangers we escape
“ Where chafes the fretful tide on Malea’s cape,
“ And now in view this lovely island rose,
“ Seat of my former and my later woes.
“ But ah ! this lovely isle, the famed resort
“ Where gentle love was said to keep his court,
“ (For sure these happy vales and cloudless skies
“ Should nought inspire but tender sympathies,)
“ Usurp’d by strife, by vengeance, and by hate,
“ Has lost all vestige of its former state.

“ Some noble ladies in our vessel came,
“ And mid the rest a young and beauteous dame,

“ Who, from the fear and trouble of the seas,
“ Besought our crew to go on shore for ease.
“ Her name was Blanche,—and I could now relate,
“ But for my own, some records of her fate,
“ That touch’d with pity every hearer’s breast,
“ And moved us all to grant her the request.

“ The sun was hardly westering on his way,
“ When glad we anchor’d in a pleasant bay ;
“ And for our better safety, sent before
“ Some chosen knights to look about the shore,
“ Who soon return’d with joyful tidings crown’d,
“ The spot was fair, and all was safe around.
“ Pitch’d by their hands, our proud pavilion stood
“ Beside a creek, and shelter’d by a wood,
“ Where, by the land-breeze tempted, with delight
“ The happy dames prepared to pass the night.
“ The knights with cates our tented closure stored,
“ With couches some, and some remain’d aboard,

“ And others gather’d fruitage in the wood,
“ And others fuel brought to cook our food ;
“ Each toil’d so cheerly for his favourite dame,
“ As left to labour little but the name.

“ In feast and joyance went a happy hour,
“ But when the dusky evening ’gan to low’r
“ The men for woodfowl to the thickets fared,
“ And left but youthful Celmond for our guard,—
“ A comely squire, with various gifts endued,
“ A graceful portance, and a merry mood,
“ Full voluble of speech, and fit to string
“ A lady’s lute, or prance it in the ring,
“ Or pointless arms in playful strife to wield,
“ But ever absent from the dangerous field,
“ And rather left to please us than to shield.

“ ’Twas dark, and as we sat with fix’d desire
“ Listening the merry trifles of our squire,

“ A hand unseen the curtain drew aside,
“ And straight approach’d a man with martial stride;
“ Pale, haggard, bony,—with a joy severe
“ Most serpent-like he stole upon our cheer,
“ And gleam’d such numbing horror from his eyes
“ As chain’d our senses, and repress’d our cries.
“ Powerless we sat, and in our circle stood
“ With folded arms the gloomy man of blood
“ Noting our silent griefs, as if they fed
“ His savage heart, and glaring on our dread.

“ Scared at the unearthly look, I fondly press’d
“ My lovely infant closer to my breast,
“ ‘ And who art thou?’ with faltering voice I cried,—
“ ‘ Thy nation’s dread,’ he scornfully replied;
“ ‘ And for my name—haste homeward and explore
“ Her towns in ruins rapt on every shore,
“ Her slaughter’d hinds, who lie without a shroud
“ Upon the furrows by their coulters plough’d;

“ And lest thy memory yet refuse to bear
“ These frail and trivial marks recorded there,
“ Say, when thy lord shall question of thy child
“ Which ere he went upon thy bosom smiled,
“ Say, that Mortaign has seized his darling pride,
“ And in weak mercy saved his trembling bride,
“ Though born of English strain, that he might hear
“ The tale with gladness told by lips so dear—
“ Live, and rejoice !” he said, and grimly smiled.
“ But strong in passion, to defend my child
“ I strove : He seized me struggling by the hair,
“ And in a trice o’ermastering my despair,
“ Dash’d me to earth, and left me as I lay
“ A mother now no more, and went away.

“ Oh devilish man ! thy villain deeds before
“ Oft had I heard on England’s ravaged shore ;
“ That mildew, blight, and plague were in thine hand
“ Gather’d to fall on that unhappy land ;

“ That death in every grisly shape appear’d
“ Whene’er thy cloudy banner was uprear’d;
“ And though I oft had imaged to my sight
“ A frame that sorted with those deeds of might,
“ The fancied murderer that I seem’d to see
“ Was as a power of light compared with thee.

“ Malign, accursed fiend, I have thee yet !
“ Thy torturing gibe I never shall forget ;
“ Thine eye, by villain thoughts more dreadful made ;
“ Thy form, the horror of a ghost unlaid,
“ From human forms by nature set apart
“ To lodge the brutality of thy stone-hard heart.

“ Ah, my sweet cherub ! could I know her state,
“ That she is well, I ne’er had blamed my fate.
“ If yet she lives, though the unfriendly skies
“ Forbid my child to glad a mother’s eyes,
“ May all of good be hers ; nor sorrow’s tooth,
“ Nor menial toil, consume her tender youth !

“ If yet unwed, may no bad arts betray
“ Her noble nature, and infest her way
“ With nets of subtle guile ! or if a wife,
“ Calm may she journey through the vale of life
“ Graced with a lord like mine !—but oh ! denied
“ The parting pang that tore him from my side !—
“ If she be gone, lie gently on her breast
“ Green earth, and violets mark her place of rest
“ Hallowed and sweet, and annual dirges tell,
“ And Christian tears, where sleeps my Rosabelle !

“ But for the miscreant, wheresoe’er he be,
“ Still may he quaff the dregs of misery !
“ And for his deeds on shuddering nature done,
“ The orphan’s and the parent’s malison
“ Pursue him phrenzied through his dark career,
“ From a world’s torment to a death of fear !
“ Uncoffined may he lie, and round his grave
“ May sad roots fatten, and rank hemlock wave ;

“ Howlings be heard, and sights and sounds of bane
“ To mark the funeral sod of bad Mortaign !

“ You start, Zoraida !—be the curse unsaid—
“ Thy pale and quivering lips my rage upbraid—
“ It means not aught—more need have I of prayer
“ To cure my soul, and teach it how to bear,
“ Than this wild passion that shuts out the light
“ Of my poor reason, and obscures it quite.”

ZORAIDA.

“ Forgive me, mournful Christian ; for thy tale
“ Would turn the sterner check of man to pale.
“ Unhappy mother ! more unhappy she
“ Torn from a parent kind and good like thee !
“ But strive, I pray thee, strive to cast away
“ The sad remembrance of that distant day
“ But for a little term, and when the light
“ Shall summon mortals from their dreams of night,

“ Mortaign himself, who haply deems his crime

“ Long lost and swallowed in the abyss of time,

“ In dreadful judgment shall behold it rise

“ Imaged in thy sad form and faded eyes.

“ Long has he lived on fair Cythera's shore

“ Loved and renown'd, a man of guilt no more ;

“ Labouring a little plot beside the main,

“ And earning with his net a scanty gain ;

“ Known far and wide, though much he strove to fly

“ All note, and herds not with society.

“ I thought him good—his calm and lone retreat,

“ His life of labour, favour'd the deceit :

“ 'Tis given out, that by the moon's pale light

“ He loves to wander on the beach by night

“ Sad and alone, and with a sage's eye

“ Pore on the lucid orbs that gem the sky,

“ Or deeps that fail in dark infinity.

“ E'en now he suffers for a noble deed,

“ In Alfred's cause and mine condemn'd to bleed.

“ But, noble matron, till the morn forego,
“ In pity to myself, thy private woe,
“ And tell me, why at Alfred’s name I trace
“ Thy soul’s commotion in thine alter’d face ?
“ Tell, I conjure thee”——

MATILDA.

“ Sleep, remembrance sleep
“ Of my poor child, and eyes forget to weep,
“ Till morning shall the fearful theme renew,
“ And bring the foul marauder to my view !

“ Now list, Zoraida :—Soon the comrades came,
“ Well stored with fruitage and with woodland game;
“ But human language lamely halts behind
“ The rage and anguish of the father’s mind.
“ Scarce could the knights protect the trembling
 squire, ·
“ And bid him fly the tempest of his ire.
“ Thus of his first revenge bereft, he swore
“ A bitterer vengeance on the hostile shore.

“ In haste the ladies to the bark were sent ;
“ The knights, on dreadful vengeance all intent,
“ With swords and torches arm’d, a gloomy band
“ To scatter fire and carnage o’er the land.
“ They pierced the wood, and soon their trembling
 dames
“ Heard dismal shrieks, and saw the redd’ning flames,
“ From hamlet, barn, or tower throughout the night,
“ Till the first lark had heralded the light ;
“ Then we beheld them mustering on the shore,
“ A horrid crew, besmear’d with dust and gore,
“ Feeble with wounds, or by the night-fire burn’d,
“ On board our anchor’d vessel they return’d,
“ Still hovering on the shore, and waiting day,
“ Shelter’d by trees within a further bay.

“ There, as his vengeance yet were incomplete,
“ My gloomy husband from that close retreat
“ Silent and sullen look’d upon the land,
“ As if some deed more savage yet he plann’d.

“ The day wore on, and by its light we found
“ Our vessel moor’d beside a garden-ground ;
“ Shrubs of all hues delicious fragrance gave,
“ And spicy boughs hung flowering o’er the wave,
“ Charming the weary senses to delight
“ With all to feast the smell or glad the sight ;
“ But nought of lovely nature could impart
“ A thought but vengeance on my husband’s heart ;
“ Still on the shore he brooded deadly pale,
“ With clouded brow, and eye of deepest bale,
“ Till, mid some almonds that o’ershrubb’d the
 green,
“ Wandering alone a little boy was seen,
“ Prank’d in such costly and superb attire,
“ As by its rareness mark’d a noble sire.
“ Nearer with lagging foot the wanderer bent,
“ Platting a crown, and oft aside he went
“ Amid the foliage, from the flowers beneath
“ To gather those that sorted with his wreath.

“ Then first my lord with ghastly pleasure smiled,
“ And leap’d to land, and lured the little child
“ With glittering trinkets and with shew of play
“ To leave his garland, and to come that way.
“ The little child advancing laugh’d to see
“ In one of graver age such infant glee,
“ While yet the spoiler counterfeits delight,
“ And now is hid, and now appears in sight,
“ Luring by mimic sport and many a toy
“ Within his grasp the unsuspecting boy,
“ And bore him to our bark ;—his piercing cries,
“ And the big tears that trickled from his eyes,
“ And words of import to our crew unknown,
“ But tokening anguish from their mournful tone,
“ Soon won my pity for his hapless case ;
“ And as I look’d upon his blooming face,
“ Sad mother thought I of a child so fair
“ Thus torn untimely from thy shielding care ;
“ Well by my own thy anguish I can tell,
“ But newly robb’d of lovely Rosabelle.

“ His noble look a princely birth express’d,
“ Graceful his portance, and his costly vest
“ Seem’d as of fairy filaments entwined ;
“ His upper garb a silken sash confined,
“ And from his neck, by pearls together strung,
“ Beneath his girdle a medallion hung
“ Curiously graved, and character’d around—
“ The like was never seen on Christian ground.
“ You weep ;—but yet awhile restrain thy tears
“ For the dark clouds that mark’d my coming years.

“ Beneath our care the lovely changeling thrived,
“ And with ourselves at England’s shore arrived,
“ Growing in grace, and in our language taught
“ To give an utterance to his early thought.
“ There as we mark’d him in his infant age
“ In sports beyond his playful peers engage,
“ With prouder heart and finer sense endued,
“ And even in his errors prone to good,

“ From England’s better page we chose a name
“ That sorted with the promise of his fame,
“ And call’d him Alfred—sound for ever blest
“ For import of the noblest, wisest, best,
“ That should to some rare excellence belong,
“ The sage, the warrior, and the man of song,
“ By no dull monarch fitted to be worn,
“ Dreadful to friends, to enemies a scorn,
“ Who suffers none to flourish near his throne,
“ But those whose wits are narrow as his own ;
“ But due to him who suits a royal state,
“ Patron of arts, in arms supremely great,
“ And by his counsels born to govern fate.
“ And well our foster-child in youth became,
“ In all he did, the glory of his name ;
“ In warlike sport he held the highest place,
“ And ruled his gennet with the easiest grace,
“ Much moved by music, that with sweet controul
“ Of changeful cadence soothed or fired his soul.

“ Ten years had ran, nor private loss, nor foes
“ From foreign land had broke our home’s repose ;
“ To books again De Courcy gave his hours,
“ Exploring nature and her hidden powers,
“ And training Alfred in his dawning prime
“ To deeds of honour for his after time.
“ When, as he feasted on a public day
“ With England’s barons in their proud array,
“ As high the mirth from wine and music grew,
“ A crowd of wretched wanderers came in view,
“ Each of an arm or of a leg bereft,
“ And some with heads by Paynim hatchet cleft ;
“ Shorn of their ears were some, and some were blind,
“ But far the greater part remained behind,
“ More maimed and frightful than this horrid train,
“ And more had died upon the Syrian plain.

“ Pilgrims they were, and from the holy shrine,
“ Bedew’d with martyrs’ blood in Palestine ;

“ And these were wounds received from Paynim hand
“ By those who sojourn’d in that fearful land.
“ The knights were moved to pity by the view,
“ And each in haste his glittering faulchion drew,
“ And each a deadly vow of vengeance swore,
“ Never again to see his native shore
“ Till full revenge should fall on all the host
“ Who maim’d the wanderers to that holy coast.

“ Various their oaths ;—one swore upon the book
“ On which the perjured sinner fears to look ;
“ One by his lady, or the silken twist
“ That tied her duteous kestrel to her wrist ;
“ One by the royal pheasant’s painted plume,
“ One by the saints, or by the Saviour’s tomb ;
“ One to forego the bath’s luxurious use,
“ And one to taste not of enlivening juice ;
“ And other some avowed to wear within
“ The plaited mail no linen to their skin,

“ Till all the wrongs of which the pilgrims told
“ Should on the Paynim fall a hundred fold.
“ Thus on that eve was every baron sworn,
“ And late repented of his oath at morn.

“ At length arrived the sad departing day
“ That bore us from our foster-child away ;
“ For I had vow’d in every varying state
“ To be the sharer of De Courcy’s fate.
“ On the sad hour that call’d me to the tide
“ For a short space I took the youth aside,
“ And, by the very silk with jewels strung,
“ Around his neck the same medallion hung,
“ And bade him wear it both in peace and strife,
“ Nor ever lose it but with loss of life.”

ZORAIDA.

“ In the same youth a private loss we mourn,
“ Thou from a child, I from a lover torn ;

“ The curious medal, heart athirst for fame,
“ Age, arts that shed an honour on his name,
“ And soul by heavenly music moved,—the same.
“ And know, sad mother, that in quest of thee
“ That foster-child has roam’d o’er land and sea,
“ O’er thy De Courcy’s tomb has dropp’d a tear,
“ And holds thy parting mandate ever dear.
“ He calls thee mother, and believes thee so ;
“ And still, should fortune ward the coming blow,
“ He vows among the living or the dead
“ To find thy mansion or thy funeral bed.
“ But hark, I hear the bird of morning crow,
“ The burnish’d waves with early crimson glow ;
“ Yet tell me all—but in the tale be brief,
“ Nor turn aside for momentary grief,
“ For see the day wears on——”

MATILDA.

“ From camp to town,
“ In bloody fray De Courcy gain’d renown

“ O’er rocky Palestine ; where’er he came,
“ His sword was still preceded by his fame,
“ The best and bravest youth were proud to fight
“ Beneath the banner of the noblest knight ;
“ Hence firm against united hosts he stood,
“ And victory ever proved his counsels good.

“ Thus conqueror oft, he led his ardent bands
“ Swift as an eagle o’er the Syrian sands ;
“ Nor forage, rest, nor breathing time allow’d
“ In his bold march to the retreating crowd.
“ Now had he traversed far o’er Syrian ground,
“ And raised the cross, victorious and renown’d,
“ Upon a hill, whose dark and stony brow
“ Commanded all the desert plain below,
“ Where, like a gem that sparkles in the night,
“ In front the palmy Tadmor rose in sight,
“ With countless domes, and many a royal tower,
“ And godlike faues, the ghosts of ancient power.

“ The fear-struck foe were scatter’d o’er the plain,
“ And begg’d a pause for burial of their slain,
“ When to our camp two British chieftains came,
“ The blight and ruin of De Courcy’s fame,
“ Commission’d by their prince, who touch’d with
 grief

“ And poisonous envy at a conquering chief,
“ And phrenzied with the due contempt of all,
“ Of friend and foe, long fed the hidden gall ;
“ And since the people from his banner fled,
“ And worse than Paynim held their chief in dread,
“ Deserted by the realm, with deadliest hate
“ He sought to crush whate’er was good and great,
“ And sink the worth he could not imitate ;
“ To paralyse the brave, exalt the base,
“ Whose foul defeats might hide his own disgrace.

“ And well these captains for the work were sought,
“ Dull, fearful, old, beneath his banner taught

“ To seek for safety only by retreat,
“ To fly by rule, and methodize defeat.
“ Then first De Courcy droop’d,—nor he alone,
“ But every warrior mourn’d the work undone
“ In silent agony ;—the beaten foes
“ Against our wavering bands in triumph rose,
“ While by a laughing rabble press’d and gall’d,
“ The conquering Briton felt his heart appall’d.

“ Fear-struck and sad we fled ;—the foe pursued
“ With bitter taunts our scatter’d multitude,
“ And trampled on our dying and our slain
“ That festering lay on that unhappy plain ;
“ While those who lived, no more a dauntless host,
“ The foeman’s terror, and their country’s boast,
“ Stole off by night in fearful disarray
“ To cope with famine and fatigue by day,
“ Mute as a funeral pomp ; and some with gyves
“ To bitter slavery bow’d to save their lives ;

“ Some by rich bribes the Paynim mercy shared,
“ And some by treachery to their friends were spared.
“ Meanwhile disease and famine, hand in hand,
“ Prey’d on the patriot few who made a stand,
“ That every warrior of that fated crew
“ Seem’d as a loathsome lazar to the view.

“ It was upon a sad and rayless night,
“ When with some females by a taper’s light
“ I sat within my tent, and with my loom
“ Strove to forget in vain my wretched doom :
“ No Courcy yet—but on the winds from far
“ We heard the hoarse and hollow din of war ;
“ Shrieks, groans, and tumult, loud and louder grow,
“ And now Saint George, and Paynim Alla now
“ From the dire spot alternately resound,
“ Then ceased at once, and all was still around.

“ Short my suspense ; for borne upon a bier,
“ Half dead with horror and a stony fear,

“ My eyes on pale De Courcy’s form I cast,
“ Return’d to languish, and to breathe his last ;
“ And, but the power of language was denied,
“ With some dear task to charge me ere he died :
“ But death soon tore him from my duteous love,
“ And angels took him to themselves above.
“ But on this earth a solitary grave
“ In Syria’s desert hollowed by the brave,
“ Beside a stone of granite huge and rude
“ That stands alone in that bare solitude,
“ Graved with unshapely letters of his name,
“ Is all the relique of De Courcy’s fame.

“ Oh happy in his end ! released from pain,
“ From pining anguish, and the victor’s chain,
“ That bound the sad survivors of that day,
“ Far from their native land and friends away,
“ To linger out a life of hopeless toil,
“ And die neglected in a hostile soil.

“ Yet on myself a kinder fate has smiled,
“ And made me love my mistress as my child;
“ For when, Zoraida, on thy face I look,
“ Read as I am in sad misfortune’s book,
“ Such dear delusions all my fancy fill,
“ I seem at once to lose the sense of ill,
“ And drawn by powerful nature’s strong controul,
“ In thine, fair maid, I read a kindred soul.
“ And when I trace that fearful eve again
“ When the malignant and accurst Mortaign
“ Came like a greedy kite, and from my breast
“ Tore my sweet infant as she lay at rest,
“ Thus had she grown, I think, to youthful grace,
“ And hence with thee I fill a daughter’s place.

“ My own De Courcy too again I see
“ Refined to female loveliness in thee;
“ The same his arched brows, his darksome hair
“ In early youth, that next my heart I wear;

“ His changeful humour too, and varying eye,
“ That left its object for blank vacancy,
“ Then if awakened look’d so heavenly bright
“ As if it gazed on visions of delight ;
“ And when, by sickness and by grief oppress’d,
“ With stedfast eye I mark thee sink to rest,
“ Oh I have imaged Courcy ere he died,
“ As faint he lay and languish’d at my side,
“ The red blood weeping from that fatal strife,
“ While yet I watch’d the ebbs and flows of life !—
“ And thought again, no more I saw him die,
“ But changed to some bright seraph of the sky,
“ And in thy form commission’d from above
“ To soothe the relic of his earthly love !

“ Ah no !—I dream, by misery render’d wild !—
“ Yet, gentle maid, in fancy be my child ;
“ For her whom nature gave she mark’d as mine
“ Forever known by one unerring sign,—

“ A little purple rose her hand impress’d
“ With silken leaves beneath her ivory breast,
“ From whence, as if from nature’s voice it fell,
“ We named the lovely infant Rosabelle.”

Not to cold elfs I sing, but those alone
Who every change of varied bliss have known,
The bitter dregs of misery have drain’d,
Have felt a pleasure to its utmost strain’d,
And rapture drawn so finely that it pain’d ;
For only those can paint the wild delight,
When kindred souls by some rare chance unite,
When each to meet another self has sigh’d,
And sought, for ever baffled and denied,
The heart’s dull void and idle space to fill
With something still unfound, regretted still :
But should we find, as onward we pursue
Whom the soul chose, allied by nature too,
Whate’er our keen ambition hoped before,
The pomp of power, or mines of golden ore,

With all of honour and with all of joy,
Were to that treasure but a worthless toy.

Matilda's joy I leave to those alone
To tell in words, who feelingly have known,
When blushing now, now changed to deadly pale,
She saw Zoraida drink the wondrous tale,
Till all o'erpower'd upon her neck she fell,
Her very child, her own lost Rosabelle.

END OF CANTO NINTH.



THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.



CANTO TENTH.

THE
FOUR SLAVES OF CYTHERA.

CANTO TENTH.

OH, my lost country ! dear devoted land,
How shall thine arms the hovering foe withstand,
Fall'n to dishonour from thy high estate,
And led by evil counsels to thy fate !
Cradle of happy genius, once revered,
Suspected now, and by the powerful fear'd,
Of genius glowing in the fields of fame,
By noble war to memorise thy name,

That o'er contending nations proudly rose,
The shield of friends, and terrible to foes,
Forever panting yet in glory's quest,
To make the land that nursed it great and blest.

All lost, all fall'n!—thy buried honour lies
Engulph'd in trade, forbade again to rise,
Or like a ghost it rises with disdain,
And sadly haunts the fields of fight again,
Lingering on Cressi's or on Blenheim's ground,
By English genius in its pride renown'd,
Then turns, a melancholy shade, away
From the dull chieftains of this idle day.

In vain from all her isles shall Britain pour
Her hardiest sons upon the hostile shore ;
In vain shall Cambria's dreadless tribes, allied
With Scotia's mountain clans, the battle's pride ;
In vain Hibernia send her giant brood
Athirst for glory o'er the dangerous flood ;

That baleful power, that in the camp and state
Palsies our arms and counsels by its weight,
That starts from merit as a name abhorr'd,
Shall in its fall divert the warrior's sword,
Or from his arm the frustrate weapon wrest,
And turn his patriot ardour to a jest.
And happy he, who with a sluggard's ease
Can turn aside from scenes profane as these,
Can all unmoved, without a sigh, peruse
The day's disaster for his daily news,
Heedless alike of victory or disgrace,
Flow with the stream, and adulate the base,
And, with the name of patriot turn his eye
From England's shame, in peaceful apathy.
But hush, thou wandering spirit! rapt in song,
Indulge the dream, and lose a country's wrong;
Turn thee awhile from follies and from crimes
To sweet remembrances of better times;
To Hodgson yield the bold indignant line,
The lute, more tuneable to joy be thine.

The morning dawn'd—but he avily it fell
On the two captives in their prison-cell ;
And when the expected mutes at length appear'd,
Each with a manly front his comrade cheer'd,
Steel'd to his fate—but naught like death portends
The silent band, commission'd now as friends
To bring the captive pair to Hamet's view,
And prove Matilda's story false or true.
For ere the certain light in heaven arose,
The anxious matron broke on his repose,
Retold the wonder of the night gone by,
The child reclaim'd, and Alfred's history.
Now by the mutes conducted to his sight,
In fetters bound appear'd each captive knight ;
But wildly Alfred on Matilda gazed,
And “ Oh, dear parent !”—said the youth amazed ;
(And in his arms, by iron gyves oppress'd,
Clasp'd the sad slave, and held her to his breast ;)
“ Oh thou, most honour'd, (since a lonely tomb
“ On Syrian land records De Courcy's doom,)

“ For whom my youth has been in wandering past,
“ What brings thee now thy wretched eyes to cast
“ On these sad chains, restored to me too late,
“ To see thy child conducted to his fate ?
“ Canst ought remember of that mournful day
“ That tore thee, mother, from thy boy away,
“ This curious medal, which thy parting breath
“ Enjoin’d him still to treasure to his death ?—
“ Take back that funeral present, ever worn,
“ And now restored thee on my fatal morn.”

He spoke;—but Hamet with a stedfast brow
Now eyed the youth, the mystic medal now ;
Now moved to sadness, now to wonder wrought,
He sat revolving in his changeful thought,
Time, accident, and place, and as he mused
One while believed, and then belief refused.

A beauteous form, the semblance of his bride,
Who long before of sorrow’s canker died,

Was on the arras wrought, so nicely true
To nature's self in feature and in hue,
That he would stand with fix'd and tearful eye
As gazing on the loved reality,
And words of vain endearment oft essay'd,
Chiding the stubborn silence of the shade.
But now, on Alfred turn'd, he seem'd to trace
The living picture of that lovely face ;
In him it seem'd as if the form awoke,
Moved with his motion, in his utterance spoke ;
Held o'er his fetter'd sense a strange controul,
And gave such powerful warning to his soul,
That, by a new-born impulse hurried on,
All nature cried within,—“ My son, my son !
“ Thy form, face, age, thy every mystic sign,
“ And that obscure medallion, make thee mine.
“ Off with those fetters !—Oh, enchain'd to see
“ In those base gyves Mandana's progeny !—
“ No ; rather with the guilty irons bind
“ The sire, who once his offspring's death design'd.

“ Dearest remembrancer of her most dear,
“ Whom once again in thee I picture near,
“ For whom in infancy my bosom bled,
“ Torn from my sight and number’d with the dead,
“ How have I wrong’d thee ! Yet remains undone
“ The dreadful deed, and thou art still my son,
“ My own Almanzor, at whose loss my bride,
“ My loved Mandana, languish’d, droop’d, and died !
“ This curious gold was by thy mother worn,
“ And graced her ivory neck ere thou wert born,
“ With Persic letters character’d around,
“ That none might pierce their sense on Christian
ground.”

While thus he spoke, the youth mistrustful smiled
To hear a Paynim master call him child ;
His children’s loss perhaps had turn’d his mind,
Clouded his eye, and made his reason blind ;
Perhaps Matilda framed the tale, to save
Her only son, thus rescued from the grave.

In vain she told him of De Courcy's ire
That reft him yet an infant of his sire ;
He heard, but doubted of his ears and eyes ;
As one abused and mock'd by drolleries
Long stands encharm'd on airy forms to gaze—
Till Hamet strove to break his wild amaze.
“ Rest thee, my son— thy wonder yet suspend
“ For a short space, and hear me to the end.
“ Thy father lives, and tears bedim his eye
“ To think of late he sentenced thee to die.
“ And oft thy hands, unknown to thee, have dress'd
“ The sod that lies upon thy mother's breast,
“ In that lone bow'r that overlooks the deep,
“ Where yet unnoted I retire to weep.
“ Thy parents life 'twere tedious to unfold,
“ But some few records shall in brief be told
“ To wake thy love, by ignorance repress'd,
“ For her who lives but in thy father's breast.

“ Know then, in youth, on quest of beauty bent,
“ A rover o’er the Georgian plains I went,
“ And linger’d long in Tefflie’s pleasant shades,
“ Lured by the lustre of her heavenly maids.
“ But soon I learn’d, in this unhappy state,
“ That love divided but engenders hate ;
“ The beauteous forms that then entranced my eyes,
“ And rapt me all in dreams of Paradise,
“ Were but the mansions that within conceal’d
“ Each direr thought that fears to be reveal’d,
“ Framed in disguise each fury to enfold
“ A thirst for murder, with a thirst for gold.

“ Tired with the search of happiness untried
“ To Sheeraz next I journey’d for a bride,
“ Burning to call her loveliest nymph my own,
“ And centre all my joy in her alone.
“ Long time in vain I made my sojourn there,
“ To chuse the fairest maid, where all were fair,

“ Till led by fortune once I took my way
“ Deep through the bowers of pleasant Mosellay,
“ And there beheld beneath a palmy screen
“ A train of damsels sporting on the green :
“ With wreathed arms now lengthened in a row,
“ In circles now, like some enchanted shew ;
“ Next in a fairy labyrinth entwined,
“ And now a choir in close array confined,
“ The lovely ladies on their dance intent
“ In those glad shades pursued their merriment.

“ Hid in the clustering flowers I lay to gaze
“ On all the changes of that graceful maze ;
“ And though each nymph in that enchanted place
“ Surpassed in form and loveliness of face,
“ One o’er the rest transcendant shone, as far
“ As day’s bright orb exceeds each lesser star.
“ On her the rest attendant seem’d to wait,
“ And every gesture strove to imitate,

“ But when fatigued the loveliest of the crew
“ Left that green haunt, and vanished from my view,
“ How to my heart all-powerful nature said,—
“ Thy fate is linked with that celestial maid.
“ In haste I followed through the mazes round,
“ Till in another haunt again I found,
“ Beside the lapse of Rocnabad inclined,
“ To pleasing fancy, as I thought, resign’d,
“ That lovely lady, with her bosom bare,
“ Courting the coolness of the gamesome air,
“ That seem’d with joy her fervour to allay,
“ And on her tresses pant in wanton play.
“ Two nymphs beside her lay upon the green
“ To shade their mistress with a silken screen,
“ And guard her haunt, that no profaner eye
“ Might venture on her hallow’d privacy.
“ So strangely fair and holy was the shade,
“ An air so mournful through the branches play’d,
“ As if the spirits of the enamour’d rose
“ And paced the quiet mazes for repose,

“ Pored on the fountains, linger’d in the bowers,
“ And breathed remember’d love into the flowers.

“ But when I saw the balmy influence creep
“ O’er her rapt sense, and seal her eyes in sleep,
“ Incautious grown, I ventured from the maze,
“ Where late I lurk’d, to steal a closer gaze,
“ Unheard by all; but by the boughs betray’d,
“ The guardian nymphs beheld me in the shade.
“ Yet as my mien no bad design express’d,
“ They still forbore to break Mandana’s rest,
“ And seem’d as more to pity moved than fear,
“ When in the haunt they mark’d a stranger near;
“ For at my coming with a tender lay
“ The guardian ladies bade me haste away,
“ Tuned to an air of such enchanting grace
“ As made me fix’d and rooted to the place;
“ And still recorded through the lapse of time
“ Upon my memory dwells the tender rhyme,
“ Which as remembrance most in age is sweet,
“ So ye will hear, I venture to repeat.

SONG.

1.

“ Oh gaze not on that blooming face,
“ Oh gaze not on that ivory breast,
“ Nor dare to wake Maremna’s grace,
“ Who robs thee sleeping of thy rest.

2.

“ Ah, silly mortal, hence retire,
“ Nor on her sacred haunt intrude ;
“ Forbear to feed a vain desire,
“ That bends thee to her servitude.

3.

“ Retire, retire,—the tempting thought
“ Forever from thy heart resign,
“ Dare not her look with pleasure fraught,
“ And joy that never must be thine.

4.

“ Unnumber'd youths with lingering pain
“ Have languish'd for that heavenly fair,
“ Have cherish'd love that met disdain,
“ And hope that ended in despair.

5.

“ Be gone,—and in thy flight be glad,
“ For mischief only waits thy stay,
“ Beside the stream of Roenabad,
“ Amid the bowers of Mosellay.

6.

“ Oh gaze not on that blooming face,
“ Oh gaze not on that ivory breast,
“ Nor dare to wake Maremma's grace,
“ Who robs thee sleeping of thy rest.

“ Thus went the song that bade me to retreat,
“ But in its bidding only chain'd my feet,

“ And held my sense entranced as in a dream,
“ On her who lay and slumber’d by the stream.
“ While thus I stood, the train but lately seen
“ Disporting gaily on the velvet green,
“ With dismal cries came running through the way,
“ Scared from their revel by a beast of prey,
“ A limping panther, wounded in the chace,
“ That fled for safety to that secret place.

“ My youth was lapp’d in luxury and ease,
“ And all my labour was the art to please ;
“ War was my dread, in bowers of soft repose
“ I heard unharm’d, and only heard, of foes.
“ Enjoyment only was my serious care,
“ Delay’d enjoyment was my worst despair ;
“ Ne’er had I seen the front of danger near,
“ Nor tasted pleasure dash’d with aught of fear.
“ But whether love my weaker soul supplied
“ With new-born valour for an hour untried,
“ Or some protecting genius lent his aid,
“ By my unskilful arm, to save the maid,

“ I felt the vigour of my limbs increased,
“ And with such power assail’d the furious beast,
“ That by her side at one o’ermastering stroke
“ I laid the monster, ere she well awoke.

“ Turn, loved Almanzor, or if Alfred more
“ Delight my son, oh turn thee and adore
“ This likeness faint and poor of her who lies
“ Forever hid and shrouded from our eyes!
“ And though it bear the stamp of rarest art,
“ Seems warm with life, and from its hold to start,
“ Gifted with sense, and all divinely wrought
“ With hues from heaven’s aërial lustre caught,
“ Yet is it dimness to her radiant eye,
“ And to her grace but foul deformity.
“ Yet naught of beauty turn’d her gracious mind
“ To speech untender, or to thought unkind.
“ Such was the maid, who waken’d to my sight
“ To greet the trophy of her conquering knight.
“ Her scatter’d damsels far from view were gone,
“ And left their mistress with myself alone

“ Trembling and pale. I raised her on my arm,
“ And soothed with gentle words her heart’s alarm ;
“ Yet was she faint, till at the fountain side
“ I dash’d her forehead with the crystal tide,
“ And, for her sense in terror lost appear’d,
“ I breathed soft words, and knew not that she heard,
“ And haply wish’d the tender things unsaid,
“ Till thus, with look of grief, began the maid :—

“ ‘ Happy the chance that to Mandana gave
“ Thy present sword, in peril’s hour, to save,
“ And happy too the peril will appear
“ That scared my maids, and thee conducted here,
“ If but the hidden power that sways thy mind,
“ And made thy heart so valiant, made it kind.
“ For know, though first of Sheeraz’ ladies call’d,
“ I live, in glitterance of pomp, enthrall’d ;
“ And those who wreathed the dance in sportive maze
“ Who smile as friends, are set to watch my ways,
“ To note the changes of my eye or speech,
“ And e’en the language of my heart to reach ;

“ Which, ever as they note, they straight report
“ To two, the noblest youths of Persia’s court,
“ Who long have woo’d me with an equal fire,
“ And sway’d with equal claims my doubting sire,
“ Proud Bagdad’s caliph, who in grandeur reigns
“ Where Tigris waters fair Maremma’s plains.

“ ‘ And since their equal merit held his mind,
“ One while to this, and now to that inclined,
“ This day to fix my destiny he named,
“ And for the choice a royal hunt proclaim’d,—
“ That he who foremost of the crew advanced,
“ And with adventurous aim the panther lanced,
“ Should for himself the doubtful cause decide,
“ And for his valour claim me for a bride ;
“ And now, unless the dire compact I shun,
“ That beast proclaims me by a suitor won,
“ As dread, and by my heart as much abhorr’d,
“ As that fierce victim of thy saving sword.

“ Oh aid me, stranger, from this spot to fly
“ To bowers less fair with more security,
“ Where I may live remote from human eyes,
“ And humbler joys by usage learn to prize ;
“ With humbler mortals herd, securely sleep,
“ And hold my heart my own to give or keep.’

“ While thus she spoke, the tranquil shades around
“ Rung to the mellow horn’s harmonious sound,
“ The tramp of horses, and the huntsman’s cheer,
“ Bespoke the caliph with his comrades near ;
“ The victor youth rode proudly at his side,
“ Leap’d first to earth, and call’d Mandana bride.—
“ ‘ Hold,’ said the caliph, ‘ gladly I decree
“ The palm of boldness in the chace to thee ;
“ But here stands one who more than all has dared,
“ And for his daring merits the reward.—
“ Thy name, bold stranger ?’—With a faltering
 tongue,
“ While my ears inward with amazement rung,

“ I told my name—the deed admired repress’d—
“ Mandana’s voice in triumph told the rest.
“ ‘ Oh, happy youth,’ the joyful sire replied,
“ ‘ Thy valour tears my daughter from my side ;
“ Thine is Mandana, thine Maremna’s flower,
“ Accept thy fortune in a happy hour ;
“ At Sheeraz live, and as ourselves be great,
“ Or bear her homeward to thy native state ;
“ Thine is the choice.’—Upon the lovely prize
“ Of one bold deed in fear I cast my eyes,
“ But fair acceptance in her look I read
“ From yielding blushes that her cheek o’erspread.

“ I pass the rival’s grudge unnoted by,
“ The caliph’s joy, the nuptial pageantry ;
“ How every bard of that imperial place
“ Gave health and greeting to Maremna’s grace ;
“ How every choir the panther’s conqueror sung,
“ And every hall and tower with revel rung ;
“ How by some feign’d excuse from day to day
“ The sire at Sheeraz yet prolong’d our stay ;

“ Till wearied of the pomp around his throne,
“ We loath’d the court, and sigh’d to live alone,
“ In this calm isle to pass our happy days,
“ And live and love remote from public gaze.
“ But on the hour that bade us to depart
“ The caliph call’d the daughter of his heart ;
“ Awhile in silent tenderness embraced,
“ And her fair neck with this medallion graced,
“ And bade her wear it, till the powers above
“ With a male child had crown’d our happy love,
“ To keep through every fate this curious gold,
“ And in his heart the treasured sense enfold
“ There character’d around—of sovereign power
“ To lead him right in every changeful hour.
“ And thus in humbler tongue the sense I give
“ Of these dark rhymes, that tutor man to live :—

“ Root out desire,—a slumbering passion lies
“ In ambush hid to take thee by surprise ;

“ Trust well thy friends, when time approves thy
choice,—

“ To talk with friends is thinking with a voice.

“ Use Fortune as thy health, enjoy the fair,

“ Endure the bad, nor in the worst despair ;

“ For ill deserved from Fortune take the blame,

“ Her hate can all—but bring thee down to shame.

“ Thus warn’d, my son, from Sadi’s moral page,

“ Go, journey safely down from youth to age.



“ And well, Almanzor, though the sense has slept

“ In Persic rhyme, and in concealment kept,

“ Nature or precept to thy mind reveal’d

“ The truth in these mysterious lines conceal’d.

“ But to be brief. I hail’d my glad return

“ With Myrza’s daughter to this calm sojourn ;

“ Nor less Mandana greeted the resort,

“ Far from the careful splendour of a court.

“ Here lived we long in such serene delight,
“ That gods had burst with envy at the sight,
“ Till, pledges of our love, a blooming boy
“ And four fair daughters crown’d our nuptial joy.

“ It fortun’d that Granada’s lords rebell’d
“ Against their prince ; but soon in combat quell’d,
“ Each day a host for his revenge expired,
“ Unsated yet until the axe was tired.
“ The sad remainder were to Afric sent
“ To linger there in hopeless banishment ;
“ Or captive made, were to the gallies chain’d,
“ And some for ransom in their cells remain’d ;
“ Of these, the noblest rebel in his power,
“ My sire was prison’d in the Alhambra tower,
“ Doom’d by the prince in forty days to die,
“ Or claim by gold his life and liberty,
“ At such a price, that all despair’d to pay
“ The royal ransom by the stated day.
“ Then, hadst thou seen Mandana lay aside
“ Her gold, her gems, her ornaments of pride ;

“ From her fair arm her glittering bracelets tear,
“ Pearls from her neck, and diamonds from her hair ;
“ For homely plainness change her rich attire,
“ And cross, with me, the main, to save my sire ;
“ Then, then, Almanzor, had thine heart been wild
“ With pride and gladness to be call’d her child.

“ By loss of riches, dignities, and land,
“ And treasure offer’d by Mandana’s hand,
“ My sire was ransom’d ; but from day to day
“ The Moorish prince invited us to stay ;
“ One half her jewels to my bride restored,
“ And yet received us at his friendly board ;
“ Assign’d us gardens, and the noblest halls
“ Of princely pride in Aboubdoulah’s walls.

“ Deep in the midmost of a verdant court,
“ Where fair Mandana held at noon resort,
“ Four lions, carved in marble, raised on high
“ A bason wrought with curious masonry,

“ Fill’d to o’erflowing with the crystal wave,
“ That to the air around delicious coolness gave.
“ A marble urn was planted to surmount
“ Each fine-carved angle of the beauteous fount;
“ One urn was sacred to the builder’s name,
“ And graved with rhymes to Aboubdoulah’s fame;
“ One spoke the beauties of the Alhambra place;
“ On two there yet remain’d an empty space,
“ Left, as by some good providence design’d
“ To warn by timely fear Mandana’s mind;
“ For on a noon, on nought of care intent,
“ When to the lovely spot alone she went,
“ The air around such pleasing scent distill’d
“ As proved the fount by eastern odours fill’d,
“ Arabian gums within the vases threw
“ Clouds of sweet fragrance and ambrosial dew.
“ But most she wonder’d at one vacant space,
“ Graved and inscribed,—

*“ To her the garden’s grace,
“ The fair sultana, star of all the west,
“ Who walks, a goddess, over flowers unpress’d,
“ Not fountain streams, but tears by lovers wept
“ Within this cold and sorrowing urn are kept.*

*“ This read, in sadness to the next she came,
“ Unlike in wording, but in sense the same :—*

*“ To her, who wanders in this court alone,
“ By Abdelmelech call’d to share a throne,
“ No idle steam these crystal vases bring,
“ But incense offer’d by Granada’s king.*

*“ This to my ear the loved Mandana brought,
“ Nor gave we up an hour to tardy thought,
“ But, warn’d of evil, with the coming night
“ From the cursed palace we secured our flight ;
“ Disguised we fled, and bade adieu to Spain,
“ Embark’d, and hail’d our tranquil isle again.*

“ Meanwhile my brother, whom we left behind
“ Our children’s guardian, had his trust resign’d,
“ And with a band in arduous fight untried
“ Before the gates of fair Ravenna died.
“ With grief we heard : but soon Mandana press’d
“ Four female children smiling to her breast,—
“ ‘ And bring Almanzor to my arms,’ she cried,—
“ ‘ Lost is Almanzor,’ said my Almahyde.
“ ‘ Three moons are gone since last my brother play’d
“ With a bad Christian in the myrtle shade ;
“ Distant I saw, and crying out with fear,
“ As elder born, I sought to keep him near ;
“ Oft through the shrubs before my sight he cross’d,
“ Till from the spot he vanish’d, and was lost.’

“ Accursed hour ! Oh fell despite of fate !
“ How droop’d my bride I dare not to relate.
“ E’en now I see her as the loss were new,
“ Her fair rose faded to a deadly hue,

“ I hear her voice for loved Almanzor cry,
“ Address’d in vain to imaged vacancy.
“ Day following day she never raised her head
“ From the sick pillow of her mournful bed,
“ Till at that hour, when greedy for his prey
“ Grim Death prepared to summon her away,
“ Upon my breast she fondly sought relief,
“ And probed my bosom with a newer grief,
“ Of which in secret agony she pined,
“ Fearful to wound with ill a husband’s mind.

“ ‘ Oh best beloved,’ she said, “ since heaven’s decree

“ Tears me from life, and, more than life, from thee,
“ I charge thee, Hamet, with my parting sigh
“ To give one sacred promise ere I die,
“ One secret ever in thy mind to hold,
“ E’en to the children of thy heart untold.’

“ I strove, but labouring sighs the vow suppress’d,
“ She mark’d my anguish, and reveal’d the rest.

“ ‘What I reveal, I thought to bury deep,
“ And in a dread concealment let it sleep,
“ But that a voice within appears to cry,
“ That death would drop some terror from his eye,
“ With gentler pang would take me from thy side,
“ Were this one mystery told thee ere I died.
“ Lost is Almanzor—of our daughters, four
“ But lately left upon Cythera’s shore,
“ The youngest pledge, Zoraida, too is dead—
“ And lo ! a stranger infant takes her stead,
“ Fair as herself ; and hardly had I known
“ The change, but nursed the changeling for our own,
“ But for a flower that struck my wondering view,
“ That stains her bosom with a roseate hue.
“ And oh ! I charge thee with my latest breath,
“ By every dear remembrance after death,
“ That this dear child, in age and grace the same,
“ May ever bear our own Zoraida’s name,
“ Be call’d thy daughter, thy affection prove,
“ E’en as the fondest pledges of our love.’

“ I heard, and made the vow,—but now forbear
“ The curtain from our parting grief to tear ;
“ Enough I deem it, that Mandana’s grave,
“ O’er-arch’d with sweets beside the azure wave,
“ Is now my musing-place, where oft I breathe
“ A silent sigh to her who sleeps beneath.
“ How dear I held Zoraida to my heart,
“ How truly I sustain’d a father’s part,
“ She best can tell, who now, as newly born,
“ Her parent finds on this eventful morn.
“ Take back thine own, fond mother, to thine arms,
“ Behold her rich in sovereign nature’s charms,
“ Skill’d in all arts that may befit her race,
“ And lending every art a rarer grace ;
“ Then hail the day that bids me to resign
“ This valued gem, and makes it ever thine.”

He said ;—the lovers heard with mute surprise
And beating heart the tale of mysteries,

And oft a look upon Matilda threw,
Whose answering look confess'd it to be true.
But most her eyes were on the Norman bent,
Who stood in silence, thoughtful, and intent,
Listening the tale; but when she met his view,
O'erawed, and pale with terror, she withdrew,
And on her daughter's bosom seem'd to fly
The dark and piercing horror of his eye.
He mark'd the matron's fear, and thus began:—

“ In me, in me behold the guilty man;
“ In me, by fetters bow'd and silver age,
“ And from a warrior mellowed to a sage
“ Look on the foul assassin of thy rest,
“ Who stole the blooming infant from thy breast;
“ Now list, what impulse urged me to the deed,
“ That made a mother's gentle bosom bleed.
“ Know then, when rest my wearied frame required,
“ To this fair isle for harbour I retired,
“ Here courted quiet from a life of toil,
“ And from its wildness claim'd my garden-soil.

“ But soon the name of Christian noised around,
“ Had forced me to resign my little ground ;
“ So was I scorn’d by every low-born hind,
“ And made the blank for insult to mankind ;
“ When to my cabin came a noble guest,
“ Thy brother, Hamet, on a fearful quest.

“ ‘ Christian,’ he said, ‘ by one great deed ensure
“ Thy future peace, and live from hence secure ;
“ This morn a female infant, sweet and fair,
“ Left by her parents to my guardian care,
“ Died of a lingering pain. The stories told
“ O’er all Cythera’s isle pronounce thee bold ;
“ Yet all thy boldness will avail no more
“ To give thee shelter on this hostile shore,
“ Unless on Paynim or on Christian ground
“ Some female infant of a year is found,
“ Beauteous as her, who on this luckless day
“ Droop’d in her guardian’s arms, and died away ;

“ Rich in all charms that can an infant grace,
“ And fit the changeling for a daughter’s place ;
“ Go, search the land, in happy hour succeed,
“ And live in peace, the guerdon of the deed.”

“ He said, and parted ;—but with ceaseless pain
“ Of toilsome search I sought the prize in vain,
“ Till from my cabin that o’erlooks the sea
“ I watch’d a crew in all their bravery
“ Leave their proud bark, and pitch their gallant tent,
“ To pass that eve on shore with merriment.
“ The show was goodly, and among the band
“ I saw a noble lady come to land
“ In silken tissue robed, who fondly smiled
“ Upon the features of an infant child,
“ Which ever, with a mother’s joy, she press’d
“ Within the foldings of her flowing vest.

“ How I observed, with what a piercing eye
“ I watch’d at ease their vain security ;

“ With what a certain and a stealthy pace
“ I came, and tore the child from her embrace ;
“ With all the circumstance that then befel,
“ This English lady to thine ear can tell.
“ But when thy brother saw the little prize
“ Laugh in his arms, a tear bedimm’d his eyes
“ For lively joy, that one so heavenly fair
“ The loss of her who perish’d should repair ;
“ And from that hour no rude and churlish boor
“ Has ever ventured to assail my door ;
“ But all securely cabin’d in my shed,
“ Still have I lived unharm’d, without a dread
“ Lest aught of ill should on my home intrude,
“ To scare me from my peaceful solitude.”

But now the nuptial band in rich array
To Hamet’s mansion wound their joyous way ;
With scatter’d roses, timbrel, dance, and song,
The merry train their master bore along,
Propp’d on a broider’d couch, in costly pride,
On that glad hour to claim his promised bride.

But wonder held the Turkish lord to see
His hated rival, and the Norman free ;
High beat his heart, his face was flush'd with ire,
As now he view'd the son, and now the sire ;
Now on the fair his boiling anger fell,
No more Zoraida call'd, but Rosabelle.

While thus he raged, advancing o'er the green
In three bright troops a Christian host were seen ;
A chieftain headed every radiant band,
And every chief conducted by the hand
A noble dame, and every noble dame
Beneath her mantle hid her face for shame.
Still they advanced, till halting on the lawn,
Each separate troop behind its chief was drawn,
And soon a herald from their squadron sent
Announced a courteous greeting and intent :—
“ Friendship to all on fair Cythera's coast,
“ And salutation from the Christian host :
“ Alfred we claim, with him the Norman knight,
“ Our friends, and luckless partners of our flight ;

“ And in our train three gentle brides require
“ Pardon and love from their forgiving sire.”

How joy'd the father in his hall to greet
His lovely daughters kneeling at his feet ;
How joy'd the comrade knights again to see
Their valiant leader and the Norman free ;
How each with wonder heard whate'er befell
To brave Almanzor and fair Rosabelle ;
How wealthy Zulemah with envious pain
Departed homeward with his nuptial train,
The matron own'd her long-lost child with joy,
And Hamet's heart exulted in his boy ;
How either parent at their fortune smiled,
And crown'd with bliss the love of either child ;
How with the feast, the dance, and merry lay,
Paynim and Christian pass'd the happy day,
I leave unsung.—But while the mirth was high,
A sudden sadness clouded Hamet's eye ;
Silent he sat, and on his children threw
A look of mourning for the last adieu ;

And much he wish'd to join the Christian band,
And fly his childless home and native land,
His halls and gardens dull and irksome grown,
And luxuries tasteless to himself alone.
And as in added years he now declined,
Some doubts arose spontaneous in his mind,
Some fearful scruples never felt before
To know the God whom Christian men adore,
And with the sovereign pontiff hold debate
On worlds removed beyond this mortal state.
This fix'd his mind, and all with glad assent
Approved the choice, and hail'd the sire's intent.

But in the silent and the darksome hour
Almanzor hasten'd to that mystic bower,
With clustering roses and the vine o'ergrown,
Where slept his mother, long to him unknown;
There in deep vigils through the gloom of night
He oft invoked Mandana's gentle sprite
In holy musing, till the crimson ray
Peer'd forth in joy, and summon'd him away.

Thus quitted of his vow, in every clime
O'er land and flood for an uncertain time
Among the dead and living to enquire,
Where lived or died his mother and his sire.

But now the merry bugles call the host
At early dawn to muster on the coast,
Squires, knights, and brides, and all the splendid train
Throng to the barks obedient to the strain ;
And soon, by favouring breezes borne, descry
The mountain peaks of beauteous Italy,
Each homeward bent,—and as my legend says,
The Norman chief in quiet pass'd his days ;
The sire was happy in his children's loss,
And for the prophet's law embraced the cross ;
Matilda long her lovely child caress'd,
And all the knights with all their brides were blest.

END OF CANTO TENTH.

NOTES.

NOTES TO IOLANTE.

Page 78, Stanza 7.

“*Sho fled through places frightful and obscure.*”

Fugge tra selve spaventose e scure.

ORLANDO FURIOSO.

In this tale the octave stanza, and the manner of the Italian school, are attempted. The adventure in the wood is borrowed from an incident said to have happened in Hungary. It is a striking instance of female courage and presence of mind, and well deserving to be recorded.

Page 99, St. 50 & 51.

“*A tender maid is like a floweret sweet,*” &c.

This simile has passed through the hands of Catullus, Ariosto, and others. The former may claim priority of

invention, but will bear no comparison with the latter either in harmony or richness. The first line of the Latin poet is made to hiss the writer by a repetition of that letter, which rises in arms against the first excellence of poetry, sweetness of sound. I transcribe the whole passage from either author.

*Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis
 Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro,
 Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber,
 Multi illum pueri multæ optavere puellæ;
 Idem cum tenui carptus defloruit ungui
 Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ;
 Sic virgo, dum intacta manet, tum cara suis, sed
 Cum castum amisit polluto corpore florem,
 Nec pueris jucunda manet, nec cara puellis.*

1.

*La verginella è simile alla rosa
 Che in bel giardin, su la nativa spina,
 Mentre sola e sicura si riposa,
 Ne gregge, ne pastor se le avvicina.
 L'aura soave, e l'alba rugiadosa,
 L'acqua, la terra al suo favor s'inchina.
 Giovani vaghi, e donne innamorate
 Amano averne seni e tempie ornate.*

2.

*Ma non sì tosto dal materno stelo
 Rimossa viene, e dal suo ceppo verde.*

*Chè quanto avea dagli uomini e dal cielo
 Favor, grazzia, e bellezza, tutto perde.
 La vergine, che il fior, di che piu zelo
 Chè de' begli occhi, e della vita averde'
 Lascia altrui corre, il pregio che avea in manti
 Perde nel cor di tutti gli altri amanti.*

Grace, harmony, and richness of colouring, in a word, poetry, is wholly on the side of the modern Italian, who in this passage has availed himself of the sweetest modulations of the sweetest and most sonorous language. No language, ancient, or modern, can boast a line, whose modulation more inartificially accords with its meaning, than the fifth line of the first stanza,—

L'aura soave, e l'alba rugiadosa.

The five vowels are all in play; and were the verse read to any ear, but the most senseless, it could not fail to present to the hearer, however untutored in the language, some pleasing picture of repose and serenity.

Page 101, St. 54 & 55.

Fair winding vale, and thou delicious stream.

This and the following stanza owe their turn to two sonnets of Petrarch, of peculiar elegance and tenderness.

SON. 260. Sec. Par.

Valle, che de' lamenti se' piena;
Fiume, che spesso del mio pianger cresci;
Fere silvestre, vaghi augelli, e pesci,
Che l'una e l'altra verde riva affrena;
Aria de' miei sospir calda, e serena;
Dolce sentier, che sì amaro riesci;
Colle, che mi piacesti, or mi rincresci,
Ov' ancor per usanza amor mi mena;
Ben riconosco in voi l'usate forme,
Non, lasso' in me, che di sì lieta vita
Son fatto albergo d' infinita doglia.
Quinci vedea 'il mio bene, e per quest' orme
Torno a veder ond' al ciel nuda è gita
Lasciando in terra la sua bella spoglia.

SON. 188. Prim. Par.

S'una fede amorosa, un cor non finto,
Un languir dolce, un disiar cortese;
S'oneste voglie in gentil foco accese;
S'un lungo error in cieco laberinto;
Se nella fronte ogni pensier dipinto,
Od in voci interrotte appena intese,
Or da paura, or da vergogna offese;
S'un pallor di viola, e d'amor tinto,
S'aver altrui più caro, che se stesso;
Se lagrimar, e sospirar maisempre,
Pascendosi di duol, d'ira, e d' affanno;
S'arder da lunge ed agghiacciar da presso;
Son le cagion ch' amando i' mi distempre,
Vostro, donna, il peccato, e mio fu' il danno.

*Now publishing uniformly with this Volume, written by
the same Author,*

EDWY AND ELGIVA, AND SIR EVERARD.

SECOND EDITION.

“SINCE the days of Dryden we have scarcely ever witnessed that goodly sight, a short and interesting tale in the regular English couplet. We have had epic poems, at least, at the rate of one for every year; and ballads, both old and new, in every possible variety of metre: but no tales told in the true language of our national poetry. We would, therefore, gladly hail this little volume as the forerunner of better times to come, as the vehicle in which the genius of old English verse has ventured to return from his long banishment, and reassume the ancient honours of his empire.

“Dryden is often most admirable for the art with which he has interweaved his moral sentences and allusions into the main body of his tale; and Mr. Bland,

together with many of his other excellencies, has very judiciously transfused this also into his poetry, and even, in some instances, improved upon it."

CRITICAL REVIEW, Feb. 1808.

"We have read these two poems with real satisfaction, and have no hesitation in promising the lovers of poetry, that they will here meet with some very beautiful passages, and two very interesting and spirited compositions."

BRITISH CRITIC, Mar. 1808.

"In two tales, Mr. Bland has embellished the charms of incident, character, description, and sentiment, with graceful diction and harmonious versification. We do not often witness lines so uniformly smooth, joined with such diversity of cadence; and it is equally rare to meet with a style of such laboured elegance, so easy in its general effect, and so free from vicious affectation."

MONTHLY REVIEW, Mar. 1808.

"If we mistake not, our readers will have participated in the interest we own we have felt in the story. With

regard to the poetry, the long extracts we have given will enable our readers to form their own judgment. They will probably have noticed a decided imitation and strong resemblance of the style of Dryden. Mr. Bland seems to have made that author his model, and has been pretty successful in copying him, which to us forms no small recommendation of his work. His lines often run in couplets, and his rhymes seem as studiously accurate as Pope's; but there is, upon the whole, a much greater portion of the ease and spirit of Dryden."

ANTI-JACOBIN REVIEW, Oct. 1808.

FINIS.

T. DAVISON, Printer, Whitefriars.

University of California, Los Angeles



L 007 185 902 9

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 073 759 3

